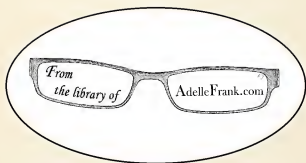


**BUILDERS**  

---

**of the Church of  
the Brethren**

**JOHN S. FLORY**





OLD GERMANTOWN MEETINGHOUSE

**BUILDERS**  
**of the Church of**  
**the Brethren**

BY  
JOHN S. FLORY

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## DEDICATION

TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH OF THE  
BRETHREN, IN WHOSE INTEREST THE FOLLOWING  
CHAPTERS HAVE BEEN PREPARED, THIS VOL-  
UME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



## INTRODUCTION

Biographical study is always interesting. As Emerson has somewhere pointed out, the life of the most obscure person may be rich in suggestiveness and full of instruction. Whether we will it so or not, the simple details of our everyday life are exerting their influence for weal or for woe upon those about us. We cannot escape the effects of our own acts.

A source of perennial interest in life is its concreteness. In the career of an individual we see principles in the process of demonstration. Motives express themselves in acts. We know the aims and purposes of a career from its activities. From what a person does we read the deep, if sometimes obscure, purposes of the soul.

In this little volume are presented briefly the life stories of several leaders of the Church of the Brethren. An effort has been made to tell these stories simply, and for the most part the incidents are homely and simple enough. But the incidents are not the things of chief importance. What do these details of activity mean? What is the motive that prompted them? What led these men to give themselves up to the pursuit of the objectives to which they dedicated their lives? If we can understand these things the narratives take on a new meaning. They cease to be



mere stories and become interpretations. And that is what they are intended to be.

These were great and good men. They lived heroic lives. Each was chosen for this volume because he made a definite contribution to the attainment of some worthy ideal in our church life. The splendid courage, and the self-sacrificing spirit with which they devoted themselves to the service of the church should be an inspiration to us. In the best sense of the word these men were builders of the church, and in many ways they builded better than they knew.

The little book is presented to the young people of the church with the hope that the noble, godly lives of these leaders may help them to appreciate more fully the splendid heritage we have in their example, and the fine ideals for which they lived and wrought. When we see what the church meant to them and what they were willing to give to it, may it be that it has a meaning for us that we have not yet fully understood or appreciated? Jno. S. Flory.

*Bridgewater, Va.*

*March 4, 1925.*

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## CHAPTER I

### Alexander Mack

#### The Founder of the Church

**I**F the American traveler in Germany today should leave the main route of travel and, instead of directing his course to Berlin or Frankfort, would do the unusual thing and turn aside into the Palatinate, he could visit the scene of the early life of a great man of the eighteenth century. Here, somewhat remote from the main thoroughfares, in the secluded hill country of upper Germany, is the little town of Schriesheim. In this humble village was born in 1679 Alexander Mack, the founder of the Church of the Brethren.

#### The Mack Family

In the eighteenth century Schriesheim was a quiet, rustic village with nothing extraordinary about it. Through the village flows a stream of water upon whose banks stood a towering mill, the machinery of which was run by a powerful overshot wheel turned by the force of the stream. In one of the best homes of the village, at some distance away on the hillside, lived the Macks. They were a thrifty, industrious people. Besides their splendid mill and stately home they owned extensive vineyards at the

edge of town. They were of the very sturdy population of the neighborhood.

Not only in business, however, but also in the religious life of the community the Macks were among the leaders. At the old brown church at the corner of the street they were regular attendants, and their example of moral uprightness and Christian integrity was a sort of model in the town. The details of life in the Mack home are not preserved, but we know that an atmosphere of religion and culture prevailed. The boy who is the subject of our sketch in this chapter was early led into the ways of piety by his God-fearing parents, and early became a communicant of the Reformed Church.

The educational opportunities of Schriesheim were not much better or worse than those of the average German village at the time, but young Mack enjoyed the local school privileges to the fullest degree. What other educational advantages he had we have no way of knowing. But that he had the opportunity for a good education is clearly evident. Alexander Mack was a man of true culture, well informed and of sound judgment. He may not have carried away a degree from a university, but that he enjoyed a liberal education, and was well versed in the history of his time, is certain.

So to the American traveler in the Palatinate it would be a pleasant experience to ruminate about this rustic village, visit the seat of the old homestead, and

the scene of the stately mill, to tread once more the probable acres of the Mack vineyards, and thus live over again some of the early experiences of the founder of the Brethren Church.

### **Mack Becomes a Separatist**

When Alexander Mack grew to manhood he became dissatisfied with the religious conditions of the day. To his sincere nature the church seemed wanting in vital piety; the services were cold and formal, lacking appeal and the true spirit of worship. He felt that the church had lost its spiritual power, and the more he studied his Bible and the history of the early church, the more did he become convinced that this was true. But when he investigated the usage in other churches, the Lutheran and the Catholic, he found the conditions there no better.

The fact is the church had become worldly. Its polity had dwindled to a formulistic ritual, and religion had come to be little more than a form. Mack's true nature and earnest spirit rebelled at what seemed to him a mockery of religion. So he refused to accept the creed of the establishment and separated himself from the communion. Thus he became a Separatist, without a church home.

### **A Famous Friendship**

At this time Alexander Mack had a very close friend in the person of Christopher Hochmann. Hoch-

mann, like Mack, was of a profoundly religious nature, and he too had found the church largely devoid of spirituality. So, like his friend, he had left the church because of its failure to minister to his spiritual needs.

Probably this spiritual isolation had much to do with binding these two earnest young souls together. They spent much time conversing and discussing the conditions of the period. Both were equally disappointed in the want of spirituality in the churches. How to remedy this and to bring a spirit of vital piety into the church again was a burning question with both of them.

Both had been well educated, had been brought up in Christian homes, and were young men of ripe culture and true vital piety. They deplored the laxity of morality and religion in their day. Their hearts yearned for better things, and for the opportunity to be of real service to their day and generation.

Impelled by such motives they started up the Rhine Valley on a preaching tour. Their earnestness, their ability, their natural refinement and manner of life, and their sincere convictions stirred many souls; and yet, their preaching was not satisfactory to themselves. When they had convicted sinners of the error of their way and pointed them to a better life, they still had no church organization into which they could invite them. This proved a real detriment to their efforts. They returned home with hearts full of love for God and for his service, and yet chagrined and baffled, feeling that their efforts had been of little avail.

### Seeking the Light

But they were not lightly to be overcome by discouragement. They were seeking the light and were bent on finding a better way. It occurred to them, since they had not traveled extensively, that there might be a people somewhere of whom they had no knowledge, who practiced the doctrines of the New Testament as they understood them; consequently, they betook themselves to an investigation as to whether this might be true.

They traveled widely through different parts of Germany, making diligent inquiry about the faith and practice of the various Christian bodies of which they could learn, but nowhere did they find evidence of such practices as they understood the New Testament to teach. Again baffled and disappointed they returned to their homes.

But they were not ready to give up their search. While the present revealed no Christian bodies practicing the ordinances as they understood them, might it not be that earlier Christian communities had done so? In pursuit of this clue they betook themselves to a study of church history, with the hope of finding that somewhere in the past the New Testament practices had been observed. Their inquiries led them back to the church fathers, and to the time of the apostles. Here they found their views fully vindicated. This encouraged them in the conviction that they were correct, and increased their desire for an



organization in which these rites might be celebrated.

In their inquiries and investigations thus far, the two friends had been in complete accord. As to the propriety of the next step, however, they differed. Since they were not able to discover a body of Christians who practiced the New Testament ordinances according to their way of thinking, Hochmann would have been willing to let the matter rest here and remain only a Separatist, but Mack could not bring himself to accept this position. He felt it incumbent upon himself and others who thought as he did to effect an organization in which these rites could be celebrated.

This decision drove Mack and his friends again to the Bible. Persecution of nonconformists was almost everywhere, but Prince Henry of Wittgenstein gave general asylum to all Christian faiths in his dominion. Consequently, at Schwarzenau many dissenters assembled to avoid persecution. Among these were Mack and others interested in finding the apostolic practice of the church.

These men now gave themselves studiously to the Bible to discover what the New Testament church was like. They carefully tabulated the various records of church observance, from which they worked out a norm that fulfilled all the requirements of New Testament teaching. The observance of this they felt to be imperative upon the followers of Jesus Christ. Since there was, to their knowledge, no body of Chris-

tians that observed these rites, they felt themselves called upon by God to effect an organization for their observance, and this they proceeded to do.

### **The Birth of a Church**

Evidently, a considerable body of believers had worked together in formulating this New Testament teaching. Hochmann, as we have seen, refused to take the final step of forming a new organization. How many others were like him in this we do not know, but when the time for action came there were eight, five men and three women, willing to take the final stand, the heroic action that would present to the world again the apostolic form of worship after a lapse of many centuries.

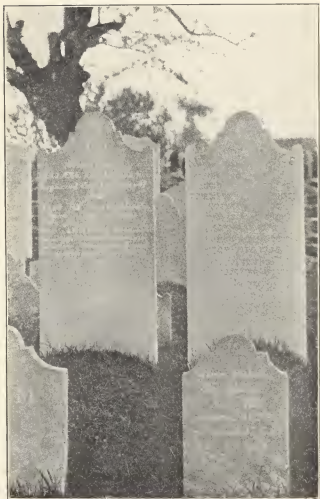
The eight persons forming this organization were Alexander Mack of Schreisheim, in the Palatinate, George Grebi of Hesse Cassel, Lucus Vetter from Hessenland, Andreas Bone of Basle, in Switzerland, Johannas Kipping of Bareit, in Wurtemberg, Anna Margaretha Mack (wife of Alexander Mack), Johanna Nothigerin Bonisin (wife of Andreas Bone), and Johanna Kippingher.

These were not a group of religious enthusiasts, nor were they led to take this step without careful and prayerful consideration. Every inch of the ground they occupied they had carefully fortified by the testimony of history, and of the inspired Word. In no sense were they extremists, unless it was in the ex-

treme heroism of their action, that of reestablishing the apostolic mode of worship after a lapse of a thousand years.

In effecting the organization, however, a difficulty arose. Their study of the Scriptures had taught them beyond question that the New Testament form of baptism is by threefold immersion in water. How to proceed to form an organization was at first perplexing. So they agreed to take the matter to God in prayer. Having done so, it seemed clear to them that the one of their number who had had experience as an evangelist and teacher should perform this rite to the rest, but this he refused to do, on the ground that he had never been immersed himself. So another season of prayer led them to the conviction that one of the other four men should be chosen by lot to administer the rite of triune baptism to him, after which he in turn administered the rite to all the rest. Which one was chosen for this sacred duty was never revealed.

Thus resolved, the solitary eight went out in the loneliness of the morning to the stream called the Eder, and the brother upon whom the lot had fallen baptized Alexander Mack according to the formula of Matthew 28: 19. When he was baptized, he in turn baptized him by whom he was baptized and the remaining three brethren and the sisters. Thus was the Church of the Brethren organized at Schwarzenau in the Palatinate in Germany in 1708.



PRESENT GRAVESTONE OF ALEXANDER MACK  
(Courtesy of Dr. M. G. Brumbaugh)



### **The Church at Schwarzenau**

From this little nucleus the congregation at Schwarzenau developed. The earnest piety of their lives soon attracted the favorable attention of those among whom they lived, and others were baptized into the fold. Among those who early came into the church were men who developed into great leaders, strong preachers, able expounders of the truth. Among these were John Henry Kalkgläser of Frankenthal, Christian Libe and Abraham Duboy of Epstein, John Naas of Marienborn, Peter Becker of Dillsheim, and others.

Some of these earnest young men were soon called to the ministry, and threw themselves eagerly into the work of expounding the Word of Truth. Thus the church grew. Missionary activity sprang up in different sections, and bodies of believers began to assemble at various points, notably in the Marienborn district, at Epstein and Creyfelt. All these centers grew up as a result of missionary activity from Schwarzenau. Over this, the mother church, Alexander Mack presided from the beginning. Under his direction and leadership the work spread and developed, and in less than a dozen years in addition to the home congregation three flourishing mission churches had been established.

### **Persecution**

But now persecution began to arise. Prince Henry

was no longer able to give security. In 1719 soldiers came, and taking little children out of the arms of their mothers had them christened at the state church. So, all of the former centers were speedily broken up. Alexander Mack and the Schwarzenau congregation left the Palatinate and established themselves at Westervein in West Friesland.

Here they were comparatively unmolested for nine years, but for various reasons they were not satisfied. The country was damp and gloomy; the customs of the people were not inviting. So they longed for a home free from persecution where outside conditions would be more favorable for the development of their faith.

The same year they went to Holland, Peter Becker led part of the Crefelt congregation to America, where they established themselves in the neighborhood of Germantown, Pennsylvania. From time to time word came to the brethren in Holland from those in the New World—glowing reports of a good and rich land, good government, kind treatment, opportunities for a livelihood, and privilege to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

### **Migration to America**

More and more reports like these turned the hearts of the exiles to this land of promise, and in 1729, Mack, still shepherding the original flock, with others who had joined it, came to America with the original congregation including 126 persons.

He settled at Germantown, where Peter Becker was at the head of an organized church, having come to America ten years before. It was a great inspiration to the little congregation to have the founder of the church in their midst. Mack and Becker labored together in the common cause in great harmony during the remainder of Mack's life. Mack naturally assumed the leadership of the congregation, and gave to it the same kind of fatherly care and wise direction that had characterized all his labors.

But the good man's life was far spent. The ample fortune with which he had begun his career was used up in ransoms, fines, removals for himself and his congregation. After six years of earnest toil in free America, broken in health by incessant labor and persecution, he fell asleep at the age of fifty-six, and was buried in the little cemetery at Germantown.

### **Personality and Character**

Alexander Mack was a man far above the ordinary. He was possessed of a noble nature and manly bearing, and would have been a conspicuous figure in any gathering. There was nothing cold or remote in his nature. A quiet, sympathetic disposition made him easy of approach, and enabled the least member of his congregation to feel easy in his presence. He led by love, never by force.

He was a man of pleasing personality. A natural courtesy and refinement expressed itself in his every



act. His was one of those large natures, comprehensive and fatherly, embracing all mankind in its sympathy and affection.

His intellectual powers were strong and active. He was a close reasoner and accurate thinker. His opinions were formed after a careful examination of all the evidence, and when once formed were not lightly changed. He was thoroughly versed in the Bible, understood its message, and placed a sane, sensible interpretation upon its language.

He had married, at the age of twenty-one, a young lady of his home town, Anna Marguerita Clingin. The marriage was a fortunate one and brought such happiness as those troublesome times would allow. Through all the trying experiences of his life, his searching for the truth, his bold venture in organizing a church, in the careful shepherding of his flock through all sorts of persecutions and trials, she faithfully stood by his side and gave him strength and encouragement.

To them were born five children, three sons and two daughters. The two little girls died in infancy, and were buried in Europe with their mother. The three sons accompanied their father to America. It is an interesting fact that each of the sons joined the church of his father in the seventeenth year of his age.

His youngest son, Alexander Mack Jr., was a man of outstanding ability. Like his father, he was tactful and wise. He was an able administrator and an in-

spiring leader. He was bishop of the Germantown congregation for fifty years. He was also an able preacher and a fluent writer. He wrote extensively in prose and verse. His poetry is of a high order. He is the most distinctively literary man the Brethren church ever produced.

Alexander Mack, the founder of the church, is the author of two printed books: "Rites and Ordinances of the House of God," and "Ground Searching Questions." Both appeared in Schwarzenau in 1713, and were probably written the same year. They have been printed many times since.

### Topics for Review

1. Tell about the early life of Alexander Mack.
2. Explain the religious conditions in Germany at that time.
3. Who were the Separatists? Why did Mack become one?
4. Explain his efforts to find the light of God's truth.
5. Why did Mack and his associates decide to organize a church?
6. When and where did the organization take place?
7. Who were the original eight?
8. Describe the spread of the church in Europe.
9. Name some of the leaders.
10. Speak of the persecutions in Germany.
11. Why did Mack and his congregation come to America?
12. Sum up his personal and Christian character.



## CHAPTER II

### John Naas

#### An Apostle of Toleration

**T**HE incident that I am now going to narrate occurred in the town of Creyfelt in upper Germany about the year 1717. This was a distressing time for many of the German people. It was a period of great religious persecution. People were not free to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, as we are in our country.

Persecution in the various German provinces had driven together at Creyfelt a large number of Dissenters. These were Christians who refused to accept the ritual of any of the state churches. Among these were a number of the Dunkers, or Brethren. Thus persecution had helped to build up a church in Creyfelt.

The elder of this church was John Naas, and associated with him in the eldership was Christian Libe. Both of them were able men and strong preachers. But they differed in temperament, Naas being a man of mild disposition, kind and charitable; while Libe was of an imperious temperament, headstrong and self-willed; and sometimes he acted hastily and even rashly.

### **An Unusual Experience**

One afternoon there was excitement in the town, and this was occasioned by a council meeting. The matter was like this: one of the young ministers of the Creyfelt congregation had recently been married and the marriage had not been quite in the conventional form. Instead of being solemnized by the minister, the ceremony was performed by a magistrate; and what was more, the magistrate was the father of the girl that was married.

This was an unusual procedure, especially for the marriage of a minister in the Church of the Brethren. Moreover, the girl herself was not a Christian. Some of the members of the Creyfelt congregation shook their heads. The matter must be looked into and the minister set right.

So a council of the church was called. The matter was presented. Young Hacker—for this was the minister's name—had acted irregularly, it was decided, in marrying outside of the church. And, speaking generally, it may be said, it is best for man and wife to belong to the same church.

But what was to be done, now that the marriage had taken place? Elder Naas, Peter Becker, and other leading members of the congregation, felt that the young man deserved a rebuke and probably some discipline from the church; but they favored dealing gently and considerately with him.

This mild course, however, did not meet the ap-

proval of Christian Libe and a small body of the members that sympathized with him. They demanded stern discipline. And when more gentle counsel seemed likely to prevail, Elder Libe, with four single men of the congregation, took the matter into their own hands and expelled Hacker from the church.

This action practically ruined the Creyfelt congregation. The members became discouraged. Some moved away; others lost interest in the cause and drifted back into the world. It was said that at least a hundred persons, just ready to join the church, now refused to do so.

Young Hacker took the matter seriously. He brooded over it until he became ill and died. The church dwindled in membership and interest until finally it ceased to exist—a sad example of radicalism in church administration.

John Naas was deeply grieved by this deplorable affair. After sternly denouncing Libe he left Creyfelt and retired into the mountains of Switzerland. Here he did some work in the ministry, but he had no spirit for work. His heart had been crushed.

### **Life in the Creyfelt Congregation**

John Naas was born at Norton, in Westphalia, about 1670. He married early in life, and when he came into the Marienborn district, about 1712, he was accompanied by his wife and daughter. Here he joined the Church of the Brethren. The wife died

soon after, and when persecution broke up the church here, in 1715, Naas and his daughter fled with other members to Creyfelt. Here the father busied himself with the activities of the church, and the daughter became the wife of William Grau, one of the members of the congregation. Some years later Brother Naas married again and raised a family of at least two children, Jacob William and Elizabeth.

At Creyfelt Elder Naas was soon recognized as one of the ablest leaders of the church. Here he was ordained to the eldership and became the leader of the congregation. He was an able preacher, and a kind and sympathetic pastor. He gave his time almost exclusively to ministering to the spiritual needs of the congregation. In doing so he endeared himself in a remarkable way to the members. He was aggressive, earnest and devoted to the best interests of the church, and his judgment on all important matters was wise and considerate. Next after Alexander Mack, the founder, John Naas was the ablest leader of the Church of the Brethren in Germany.

### **An Experience with the King's Recruiting Officers**

Elder Naas was a man of commanding figure. Several years before the incident above related he was on a preaching tour in the country adjacent to Creyfelt. While Creyfelt was in the province of Marienborn, it was under the jurisdiction of the king of Prussia. Now it happened at this time that the king's

officers were collecting a stalwart bodyguard for their sovereign. None were to be admitted into this select company except sturdy, manly figures, towering six feet or more.

During his evangelistic travels the king's recruiting officers came upon him. He was just the type of man physically that they were looking for. He, like Saul, the son of Kish, was a head taller than other people. So they solicited him to become a member of the king's bodyguard.

But Elder Naas was not looking for a military position, so he refused their request. But he was such an ideal specimen of manhood that they could not easily let him go. They arrested him and tried to compel him to enlist. But he stoutly refused. They tortured him with pinching and thumb screwing, but he refused to yield to their entreaties. They then bound him with cords and hung him up suspended by the thumb of his left hand and the great toe of his right foot until he almost died from pain and exhaustion. Finally the officers cut him down, fearing lest they should be the occasion of his death.

As he still refused to consent, they now dragged him into the presence of the king. They explained what they had done and related how persistently he had refused to be enlisted.

The king looked him over and was wonderfully pleased at the sturdy, manly appearance of the captive before him. Speaking kindly to Elder Naas, he



assured him that he would be glad to have him as a member of his personal bodyguard. "Now please tell me," he said in a conciliatory tone, "why you refuse to enlist."

"Because," replied our devout Christian, "I cannot, as I have long ago enlisted in the noblest and best army, and I cannot become a traitor to my King."

"And who is your captain?" asked the king.

"My Captain," replied he, "is the great Prince Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. I have espoused his cause, and cannot and will not forsake him."

"And I will not ask you to do so," replied the king, moved by the earnest sincerity of the man. Then handing him a gold coin, as a reward for his fidelity, he set him at liberty.

### **A Sincere and Earnest Nature**

Elder Naas was of a sincere and hearty nature. He espoused earnestly whatever he undertook. His sermons are said to have been ardent appeals. He felt deeply and spoke from the bottom of his heart.

An incident in his life some years after his release by the Prussian king indicates the earnest spirit of faith in which he carried on his church work. About 1721 he was preaching in the Rhine country in a little village of Chur Pfaltz, not far from the city of Mannheim. Here was a Christian woman who had long been confined to her bed by sickness, and it was not thought by her friends that she could ever get well.

Elder Naas was visiting some friends in the neighborhood. They told him of the sick sister's condition. He went to call at her home, and so managed that she, as well as others, might have the benefit of his conversation. This, like other instances, testifies to the fact that he was a charming and at the same time edifying conversationalist. He talked to the great edification of the large number who had assembled. And as we might naturally infer, he talked about the most worth-while things—about the church, the holy ordinances, the Bible, the beauty of Christian life and service.

After the sick woman had heard him discourse for some time she made it known to some of the household that she would like to be baptized after the manner of the early Christians. But the family thought this would be impossible. As she had been so long an invalid they questioned very seriously whether she could possibly be gotten to the Rhine, and even if she could, they doubted if she would have sufficient strength to undergo the ordinance of baptism. They feared that she might die in the hands of the administrator.

Elder Naas went to the sick woman's bed, talked with her a little and then said, "Do you have faith, that this work of the Lord can yet be performed to your sick body?" She answered, "I do." He immediately replied, "I also believe it. So let it be undertaken at once."

Seeing her faith, the friends withdrew their objections, and prepared her for baptism. Partly leading and partly carrying her, finally, with great suffering on her part, she was conducted into the Rhine.

"There she knelt down in the name of Jesus, and was, by John Naas, immersed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. After this there was the laying on of hands, and prayer offered over her, and she was healed. She went up out of the water with great rejoicing before all the others, and when she came home she ministered to them."

### **Elder Naas Comes to America**

Alexander Mack, the founder of the church, although he came in personal touch with Brother Naas only on several occasions, yet formed a very high estimate of his character and ability. After he came to America in 1729 Mack became especially solicitous about him.

Elder Mack soon sensed the fact that America promised great things for the Brethren. So he wrote to Elder Naas, and urged him to come to America. Several letters were exchanged. The good brother had been so completely crushed by the rash affair at Creyfelt that he found it difficult to feel for the work the enthusiasm he had once experienced. Mack urged him to forget the past, look to the future, come to the New World, and cast in his lot with those

who were endeavoring to establish Christ's cause beyond the sea.

Naas finally was induced to make the journey. He had a very high estimate of Alexander Mack. Naturally he would be glad to be associated with him. So, setting sail with his wife, Margaretta, and his daughter, Elizabeth, he took passage on the big *Pennsylvania Merchant*, sailing from Rotterdam, and landed in Philadelphia in September, 1733.

They were gladly received by Alexander Mack, Peter Becker, and others whom they had known in Germany. For a time the Naases were the guests of their friends in Germantown, but not for long. The good man had come to America to forget past troubles, and so after a brief period of enjoying the hospitality of his friends and brethren, and probably after at least one season of public worship with them, Brother Naas moved with his family to his new field of labor.

This was at Amwell, New Jersey. Some German families coming to Philadelphia had crossed the Delaware and taken up their abode on the other side. Elder Naas moved into their neighborhood and began to preach the Gospel with his pristine vigor and power. He soon had large and attentive congregations. Conversions followed, and a church was gradually built up.

To this body of members Elder Naas administered with loving hands and wise spiritual leadership during the rest of his natural life. He was held in high

esteem by all who knew him, and when he died, in 1741, on May 12, he had built up a flourishing congregation at Amwell, firmly indoctrinated in the principles of the Church of the Brethren. He was buried in the Amwell cemetery by the side of his wife.

### **Summation of Character**

Bishop John Naas was a great personality, large of body, and large of soul. His conversation was interesting and edifying. He had a natural grace and charm of person, a native dignity and bearing that marked him as one of God's noblemen. He was a conspicuous figure in any gathering.

He was also a scholarly man. Evidently he had had good educational opportunities in early life and had made good use of them. Besides this, he was a student all his days. He was fond of books and knew his Bible almost by heart.

He was a forceful writer, and several of his letters are still in existence. One, written to his son, Jacob William, whom he left in Switzerland when he came to America, gives an account of his experiences at sea on the voyage to this country. The letter contains some vivid descriptions and is full of shrewd observation and discriminate thinking.

He also wrote poetry sometimes. Several of his hymns are still extant. Samuel Sower, grandson of the founder of the Germantown printing press,

*John Nass*

GERMAN SIGNATURE, JOHN NASS  
(Courtesy of Dr. M. G. Brumbaugh)



THE RIVER EDER NEAR SCHWARZENAU



printed two of Elder Naas' hymns in a hymn book which he published in Baltimore in 1797.

But we shall remember Elder John Naas, not primarily as a writer, but as a great and good man, an able leader of the church, a powerful preacher, a kind and helpful pastor, and a charming conversationalist, who could delight and entertain and edify any social group from the large store of his personal experience, his knowledge and wisdom.

A man who suffered much and sacrificed much for the cause he loved, his fine and strong personality will remain with us as a noble character, who saw the true light and gave himself up unreservedly to the fullest attainment of the deep riches of grace as it was to be found in a complete and faithful allegiance to his Lord and Master.

To the strong builders in the early days of the Brethren Church too much credit can hardly be given, and too much importance can scarcely be placed upon the solid foundation which men like Elder Naas laid. In personal conduct, in all the details of public and private life, in the administration of the affairs of the church, he was an inspiring leader. And we shall ever cherish the memory of John Naas as one who wrought at the beginning and made possible the superstructure of the church that we love and in which our spiritual lives receive the nurture and help that come from a devout reliance upon Christ our Savior.



**Topics for Review**

1. Tell the Hacker incident in the Creyfelt church about 1717.
2. What part did Elder John Naas take in this?
3. How did it affect him? How did it affect the church?
4. Tell about Elder Naas' experience with the king's recruiting officers.
5. Speak of him as a church leader in Europe.
6. Estimate him as a preacher.
7. Speak of a remarkable baptism he administered in the Rhine.
8. When and why did he come to America?
9. Tell about his work at Amwell, New Jersey.
10. What can you say of him as a man and a Christian?

## CHAPTER III

### Peter Becker

#### The Organizer of the Church in America

**O**F the early life of this good man we know but little. At the time when pious people were flocking to Croyfelt for religious liberty in the early years of the eighteenth century, Peter Becker was among the number. As one of the enlightened, he was peculiarly sensitive to the disturbed spiritual condition of his day.

He was born at Dillsheim in 1687. That he was brought up in a pious home is very probable, but of his parentage nothing is known. He was a modest, quiet man of deep piety and earnest Christian conviction.

He was baptized into the Brotherhood of the Dunkers at Croyfelt in 1714. That was before the Brethren there were organized into a congregation. It was that disturbed period, when people of all shades of belief were fleeing to the few centers where there was some semblance of freedom from the usual religious persecution. He passed through the trying experiences that brought forth in those troublous times the Croyfelt congregation.

In order that we may see in some detail the distressing conditions under which these pioneers of the

faith dwelt, let us draw aside the curtain for a moment and live over again some of the severe ordeals in the early years of the Creyfelt church.

The same year that Peter Becker came to Creyfelt, 1714, the little group of Brethren that had assembled there made themselves felt in the religious life of the community by their godly lives. Their earnestness in the cause they had espoused, the fervency of their appeals and the ability with which they set forth their views attracted more than a passing attention.

### **Religious Conditions in Germany in the Early Eighteenth Century**

In this year, 1714, six members of the Reformed Church in this section became convinced that the Brethren's views on infant baptism and other doctrines were in accord with the teachings of the New Testament. As a result, they sought baptism at the hands of the Brethren, and were admitted into the church by trine immersion.

But this raised a storm. For members of the established church to desert its communion and accept fellowship with the humble, despised Taufers was beyond all endurance. The synod of the Reformed Church gravely reported the matter to the government. The government ordered the offending Brethren before the state court, which was presided over by a Catholic. Of course, they were found guilty and were sent to prison at Düsseldorf.



ORIGINAL STONE OVER GRAVE OF PETER BECKER  
(Courtesy of Dr. M. G. Brumbaugh)



Here they were put to hard labor, which continued for a period of four years. The conditions with which they were surrounded here were unsanitary and in every way wretched. Much of the time during their imprisonment they were sick. Steven Koch and Jacob William Naas visited them at different times during their imprisonment and gave them spiritual consolation. Finally, convinced that persecution could not drive them back into their former church allegiance, the government liberated them.

Peter Becker was a witness to all this high-handed injustice on the part of the government. No wonder his heart sank within him, and that he, with others, felt that to live the full Christian life at that time in Germany was almost, if not entirely, impossible. This action of the government, coupled with the action of the church in the unfortunate Hacker affair, came near crushing the good man's heart.

### **Looking to America**

We are not surprised, therefore, to learn that Peter Becker was beginning to cast longing eyes to the peaceable land of Penn beyond the Atlantic. For some years persons from this section, mostly of the Mennonite faith, had been coming to Penn's province in quest of peace and the opportunity to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. Reports of their satisfaction with their new homes were circulated among their friends in Europe. These flatter-

ing reports doubtless had much 'to do with bringing Peter Becker and his party to our shores.

### **Becker Leads a Pilgrimage to America**

Organizing a little company of his brethren, twenty families in all, he decided to cast his lot in the new world. Setting sail in the summer of 1719, they landed in Philadelphia in the fall of the same year. The voyage is said to have been a stormy one, which we may well believe.

From Philadelphia they went to the northwest about eight miles to where other Germans had settled, formerly known as Beggarstown, now Germantown. Here the twenty families provided for themselves shelter and a means of existence. They are the first body of the Church of the Brethren to come to the New World.

The first years of their sojourn in this country were spent in providing homes for themselves. Some locating in the village of Germantown, others moving farther inland along the Schuylkill, the families at length found themselves in possession of homes of their own. But, unlike what we should naturally expect, they did not organize themselves into a congregation, neither is there evidence that they held public worship in their houses. This action seems so foreign to their natural piety and their devotional spirit that it requires a word of explanation.

### **The First Years in America**

Two things at least contributed to this condition. One was their sad experiences in the fatherland, persecution by the secular and ecclesiastical courts, and division and intolerance in their own ranks. So deeply had they been wounded that the scars could not all at once be removed. These differences followed them to America. The discussion of them saddened the voyage, and now, after landing, it separated the members and depressed their homes.

But time is a great healer. The incessant toil incident to wringing a livelihood from a virgin soil and establishing a home in the wilderness, so completely absorbed their attention that the griefs and disappointments of the past were ameliorated. There is no doubt that in these pious homes personal and family devotions were kept up. As time went on friendly visits among the families became more numerous.

In 1722 Peter Becker and several others made a sort of pastoral visit among the members. This evidently did a great deal to dispel their former misunderstandings and bring them into a feeling of union and fellowship.

Another reason why a church organization was not earlier effected was the fact that there was no ordained elder or bishop in America, and the members at Germantown considered themselves as members of the Crefelt congregation. Besides this, there was no one legally authorized to form an organization. Peter



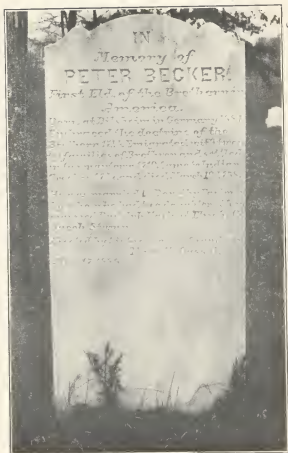
Becker was a minister but not a bishop, and, according to the polity of the church, had no authority to form an independent congregation.

Considering further his naturally modest disposition and his tendency to shrink from publicity, he was not the type of man who would break with the established order of things and establish a precedent. So we should not be too much surprised to learn that four years passed by before an organization of the Brethren in America was effected.

### **A False Rumor and the Result**

But finally the time had arrived for such an organization. And it came about very unexpectedly. In the fall of 1723 the news was spread abroad in Philadelphia that Christian Libe had arrived in the city. Probably all of the members in the New World at that time had heard his powerful oratory in Germany. No wonder that they flocked from their homes to the city once more to press his hand and listen to his matchless eloquence.

But the news of his coming proved to be only a rumor. Christian Libe had not come to America. Peter Becker, however, used the opportunity to cultivate the friendship of those who had come down to the city to hear him. He invited them to his home in Germantown, where he entertained them and preached to them. This further cultivated the spirit of fellowship in their distracted ranks.



NEW STONE MARKING GRAVE OF PETER BECKER  
(Courtesy of Dr. M. G. Brumbaugh)



Another visit is made into the up-country, where meetings are held, and finally six persons apply for baptism. The celebration of this first baptism in America is at the beginning of the organization of the church in the New World.

### **The First Baptism in America**

And now let us see if we can understand the beauty and significance of this event. It is Christmas Day, 1723. Six persons from up the Schuylkill have come down to ask baptism at the hands of Peter Becker. These are Martin Urner and his wife, Catherine, Henry Landes and his wife, Frederick Lang and John Mayle. They all come from the region of Coventry, some twenty-five miles from Germantown.

This request for baptism naturally arouses a spirit of interest in the members in the neighborhood of Germantown. For the time being business is stopped. They come together to enjoy the leading of the Holy Spirit in bringing men and women into the body of Christ. A goodly number assemble at Becker's house to go out with him to the sparkling waters of the Wis-sahickon Creek where a scripture is read, a song sung, a prayer raised to God; then, cutting away the ice of the placid stream, these six souls are buried with Christ in baptism by Peter Becker.

### **The Church Is Organized in America**

What a revival of spiritual interest is there among

the members by this new witness of the power of the Holy Spirit in men's lives! After baptism the members return to the home of John Gomorry. Here a business meeting is held in the afternoon, the first council meeting of the church in America. At this meeting an organization of the congregation is effected. Peter Becker is elected elder. What other officers at this time were designated has not been recorded, but now at least the Germantown members were an independent church organization, and no longer looked elsewhere for leadership and guidance.

### **The First Love Feast in America**

In the evening a love feast was held. It was not unlike in its setting those that had been enjoyed in Germany, and similar to those that have been repeated so many times since. Here the holy ordinances were celebrated in their beauty and simplicity. The ordinance of foot-washing, the supper, the broken bread, and the cup, each in its order, brought these devoted hearts close to their Lord and Master.

And who make up the little band that first tastes the heavenly bliss in the celebration of these sacred emblems in the church in the New World? Fortunately, history has perserved their names. The six admitted to the church earlier on this sacred day have already been named. There were seventeen others who had come in the Becker company four years before. Of these, thirteen were men and four women. The

men were Peter Becker, Steven Koch, John Hildebrand, Henry Traut, Henry Holsapple, John Gomorry, Jeremiah Traut, Balser Traut, Daniel Ritter, John Kempfer, Jacob Koch, and George Balser Gans; the women, Mariah Hildebrand, Magdalene Traut, Anna Gomorry and Joannah Gans.

Thus has the twenty-fifth of December become a trebly sacred day to the Church of the Brethren. In addition to its being the anniversary of our Lord and Savior, it is likewise the anniversary of the first baptism into the Church of the Brethren in America, the first love feast in the New World, and the organization of the church in this country.

Thus organized the little body of Germantown members are now ready to go forth in heralding the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and proclaiming his salvation to the world. All the congregations of North America, as also those of Denmark, Sweden, India, China, and Africa owe their being to this little beginning on Christmas Day, 1723.

### **The Church in America Begins to Work**

For some time after the organization Peter Becker remained the only minister of the church. During the following summer, 1724, Becker, with some of the Germantown members, paid another visit to the up-country members, preaching at various points and holding business sessions among them.

At Coventry meetings were held, and three per-

sons baptized. These, with the six received on Christmas Day the year before, made nine in this section. They were organized into a congregation—the second congregation of the Brotherhood, effected November 7, 1724.

At this meeting an election was held for a minister, and Martin Urner was chosen. So Martin Urner was the first minister chosen in the Brethren Church in this country. Other churches were established almost yearly until the church spread over a number of counties in eastern Pennsylvania; but this history we cannot now follow.

### **Personality and Character of Peter Becker**

From the organization of the church in 1723, to 1729, when Alexander Mack came to this country, Peter Becker was at the head of the church in America. He was not a natural leader of men, not a great organizer or a great preacher, but Peter Becker was a noble man, thoroughly consecrated in life and heart, and his earnest zeal and sincere piety profoundly impressed all who knew him. He was especially powerful in prayer, and was a good singer. He generally led the song service in the Germantown church. His life was a living example of uprightness, honor and integrity.

He was tender-hearted and kind; intolerance grieved him. He could have unmeasured patience with the frailties and weaknesses of others. He was a wise

counselor, and his sympathetic nature could enter lovingly and helpfully into the struggles and difficulties of those who needed help. He was universally esteemed and loved by all who knew him.

The real spirit of the man is shown in his relationship to Alexander Mack when the latter came to this country. On Mack's arrival in 1729, Becker had been here ten years and had organized the church six years before. During these six years he had been the recognized head of the church, and now, when the great founder himself came, Becker meekly stepped aside and gave the leadership of the church over to the hands of the founder. And this he did in the finest Christian spirit. Mack settled at Germantown and these two great leaders worked together during the remainder of Mack's life, in perfect accord and harmony. After the death of the founder in 1735 Becker again assumed leadership, which he held until his death, March 19, 1758.

The spirit of reverence and sincerity which Peter Becker infused into the infant church has been one of its richest heritages. Fortunate it was that in its infancy the Church of the Brethren in America should be dominated by these fine ideals of honest integrity, sincere earnestness and full reliance upon the Holy Spirit's leadership in all of the affairs of life and of the church. May the church never lose the earnest devotion and loyal adherence to all right principles and high endeavor of those true spirits who gave it organization and direction at the beginning.



The true spiritual tone of Becker's life found expression in several excellent hymns. They breathe the very spirit of the man, reverent, sincere, devout, full of trust and faith. The church will do well to remind itself from time to time of the fine ideals of this man of God, who first gave direction and tone to the church we so much love.

### **Topics for Review**

1. For what do we especially remember Peter Becker in the early history of the church?
2. What was the scene of his church activity in Germany?
3. Why did he come to America?
4. Describe the organization of the church in America.
5. Why were the members in America not organized earlier?
6. Give an account of the first baptism in America.
7. Describe the first love feast in America.
8. How many can you name of those who were present?
9. Comment on Peter Becker as a church leader.
10. Speak of his personality and character.

## CHAPTER IV

### Christopher Sower

#### A Christian Layman in Business

**C**HRISTOPHER SOWER is an example of the sterling business integrity of the early church. He was born at Laasphe, in Wittgenstein, in the province of Westphalia, Germany, in 1693. He sprang from that sturdy middle class of society that represents the moral backbone of every civilization. He was reared in a Christian home and attended the Reformed Church in his native village. There is every reason to believe that in early life he, with other members of his family, was a communicant of this church.

With the religious discussions and controversies of his time he never had any interest. He was in sympathy with the Dissenters, and as a young man had warm friends among the Dunkers. When the Dunker Church was organized in 1708, Christopher Sower was a lad fifteen years of age. It is probable that he knew personally all of the charter members of the church. At any rate, a little later he was on intimate terms with Alexander Mack, Peter Becker, Steven Koch and others of the leaders.

He had good school opportunities and used them well. It has been thought that he attended the Uni-

versity of Halle, and that he was a graduate of a medical college. At all events, he came to be a highly cultured man, possessed a vast amount of information on almost every subject, and was skillful in the use of his knowledge. His own determination and the skill with which he applied himself to every interest had a great deal to do with his success.

### **He Comes to America**

He was married in his native village in 1720. Four years later with his wife, Mariah Christina, and an infant son, he set sail for America, landing at Philadelphia in the autumn of 1724.

For several years he tried different vocations. He was tailor, farmer and mechanic in turn; he also became a clock maker, and was a skilled wheelwright. He studied the plants around Germantown and compounded medicines for which he later became famous. It is also known that he performed surgical operations; in other words, he practiced medicine. A statement in a historical publication of the time credits him with having learned thirty trades without a teacher. He was evidently resourceful and skillful in applying the useful information that he had acquired.

Christopher Sower, however, was one of those men who mature slowly, and he was well up in middle life before he found the vocation in which his splendid abilities and his many-sided greatness were given



*Laasphe, Germany, Home of Christopher Sower.*



adequate expression. He was thirty-five years of age when he joined the Brethren Church.

### **He Establishes a Printing Press at Germantown, Pennsylvania**

It was as a printer that Sower did his great work, and in this he succeeded in a remarkable way. The printing establishment he set up at Germantown was by far the most influential German press in the colonies.

In his work as a German printer he was a pioneer. What German printing was done before this was by English printers, and was set in Roman or English type. Sower's press, therefore, was the first truly German printing establishment in North America.

He founded the first German newspaper in the colonies—the first to be printed in German type. He printed the first Bible to be issued in the New World. He printed the first German almanac and did a miscellaneous printing business, which gave his press enormous influence and his name great prestige.

His press was set up in the fall of 1728. The first important work he printed was a large hymn book for the hermits at Ephrata. This cost him a great deal of effort and patience, and it also gave him a great deal of valuable experience. In fact, in passing this work through his press, he learned the printing business and some of the ins and outs of public life.

### **An Encounter with Benjamin Franklin**

As we have seen, Sower was building up his great German press at Germantown at the same time that Benjamin Franklin was leading in English printing in Philadelphia. Before Sower set up his press, Franklin had printed two hymn books for the Ephrataites, using Roman characters, as he had no German type. Naturally when the contract for this third hymn book was given to Sower, Franklin looked upon him as a competitor and he desired no competitor in printing. Sower had laid in only a moderate stock of print paper, expecting to add to this from time to time as his meager means would allow. But to print an edition of a large book would require many reams of paper. So, when the first scanty stock was exhausted, Sower went into the market to purchase more.

But now he suddenly found himself confronted by a strange situation. As he inquired into the matter he discovered that all the paper in the province of Pennsylvania was under the option of Benjamin Franklin, and Franklin refused to let Sower have any paper at all except for cash and at his own price. But Sower had just invested all that he was able to raise in the printing establishment itself, so what could he do?

He went to Ephrata and explained the situation to the leaders. Finally he induced one of the wealthiest of the Brotherhood, Conrad Weiser, to go in person to Philadelphia to see Franklin and pledge his personal

credit for the price of the paper bill. Thus paper was secured and the printing of the hymn book went on.

### **The Sower Bible**

The most monumental piece of printing that the Sower press produced was the Quarto Bible. Work was begun on this in the spring of 1742. It was a gigantic task for the equipment with which it was done. Sower had only a small hand lever press and could print but four pages at a time. Enough pages for the edition were run off; then the type was reset for another section. Thus the work dragged on from April, 1742, to July, 1743.

All sorts of perplexities arose to discourage the printer. A local legend, which may well be true, relates that when the work was at last finished, late on a summer night, the printer collected the workmen about him in the little shop, and folding his arms across his breast and lifting his eyes toward heaven, he exclaimed, "Dank Gott! Es ist vollbracht." (Thank God, it is finished.)

Issuing the Quarto Bible was in itself a great task. It was especially so under the existing conditions, because Sower produced practically everything that went into the make-up of the Bible. In order not to experience a second time the inconvenience of a "corner" in the paper market, he established his own paper mills, in which he manufactured the excellent linen paper on which the Quarto Bible was printed. He



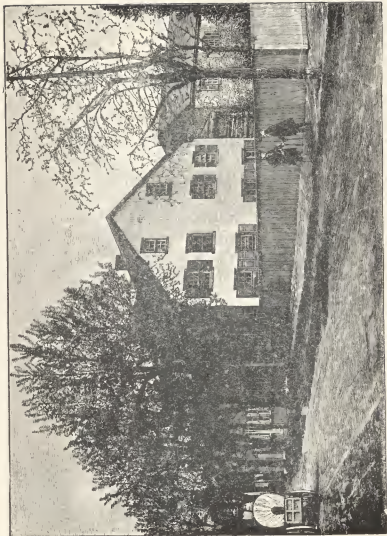
likewise manufactured the ink and some of the type used in producing the work.

Considering the circumstances of its production, Sower's Bible was a remarkable achievement, almost free from typographic errors, neat and artistic. It became exceedingly popular with the colonists, and two other editions were called for. Copies of the Bible found their way into Europe and were prized by the crowned heads of reigning families, or given a place of honor in the libraries of great universities. Copies of this Bible have been sold in this country for as much as three hundred and fifty dollars.

### **The First German Newspaper in America**

Christopher Sower also published the first German newspaper in America. The title may be translated as "The High German Pennsylvania Recorder of Events." A copy of the first issue is still in existence. It is a little sheet of four pages, approximately 10 by 14 inches. It was issued in the fall of 1739, and promised to appear quarterly. The subscription price was forty cents.

The second year the paper was changed to a monthly; four years later it was doubled in size. The name was changed several times. In 1749 it began to appear twice a month, and from 1775 on to the end of its career, two years later, it appeared weekly. Throughout the entire history of nearly forty years the price remained three shillings (forty cents), although the



RESIDENCE OF CHRISTOPHER SOWER, FIRST AND SECOND. THE PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT, ETC., OCCUPIED THE BUILDING IN THE REAR



reader now received fifty-two papers insisted of the original four, and each of these was about three times as large as at first.

How this could be done was told by the publisher in a very original way. He explained that the increased cost was covered by the large number of advertisements received, and that an honest man must not allow himself to be paid double.

The paper had a large circulation, extending from New York to Georgia, and was a great favorite among the German immigrants. It made Sower very popular among his countrymen, and put him in a position of leadership among his people almost beyond precedent.

### **Sower Defends His Countrymen**

In the early fifties, during the disturbance caused by the incidents leading up to the French and Indian War, certain English publishers became alarmed, or professed to become alarmed, at Sower's influence, exerted largely through his publication. Because of this suspicion and the rapidity with which the Germans were coming into the country an effort was made to restrict their rights and privileges. Sower came to their rescue in 1755 with a stirring pamphlet, in which he exhorted them to stand for their rights as free men.

The extent of his prestige at that time is shown by the fact that a society was organized in Philadelphia for the express purpose of counteracting his influence.

It was called the "Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge Among the Germans in Pennsylvania." Having failed to betray the Germans into a forfeiture of their rights, this society now sought to cultivate their confidence and rule them by moral suasion as Sower was doing. So they started a number of free schools among the German settlers in different parts of the province.

But this did not seem to reach their desired end. The trustees of the society then decided to bring the war still closer and meet Sower on his own ground. They resolved to set up a German press and print a newspaper, an almanac and other popular works. To encourage this undertaking Franklin sold to the society his German printing outfit at considerably less than its real value.

A paper known as the "Philadelphia Zeitung" was started in the latter part of 1755. An almanac for the next year also was issued. But these publications could not supplant those published by Sower. The paper ran until the latter part of 1757, when it failed, leaving Sower once more in undisputed possession of the field.

### **The Sower Almanac**

Another publication fully as popular as the newspaper was Sower's almanac, which first appeared in 1738. In addition to the calendar, the almanac contained a good deal of useful information. It became

exceedingly popular, the people relying almost implicitly upon it for information about the seasons, weather conditions and the like.

The way the people depended upon the calendar is shown by a humorous incident. A man by the name of Walker, from above Sumneytown, had business in Philadelphia. He consulted Sower's almanac and found that it promised fair weather. Therefore he loaded his wagon and started. When he had gotten well on the way it began to rain. It rained harder and harder until he and his load of produce were thoroughly drenched. He became angry and lost faith in the weather book and the man that made it. In this mood he came to Germantown; he stopped in front of the printing office, called Sower out and gave him a severe scolding. After hearing him through patiently, the publisher replied kindly, "O friend, friend, be not so angry, for although I made the almanac the Lord God made the weather." Mr. Walker caught something of the humor of the situation and went away better satisfied.

The Sower almanacs had an unprecedented sale. They were so popular that all competitors were driven from the field. They were sold throughout the German settlements as far south as the Carolinas and Georgia. Almost every year the edition was enlarged, and yet the editor frequently failed to have enough to supply the demand.

**Sower's Business Ethics**

As a great business conducted on the highest moral and ethical principles, the Sower press is probably without an equal. With scrupulous attention to every detail of the business, the wise use of time, economy in administration, alertness in buying and selling, shrewd business tact, and skill in handling men and means, the publisher managed his enterprise with such fidelity to honest integrity as to make it a model Christian enterprise.

We have seen that he increased his paper in size and in the number of issues through the years without advancing the price of subscription. The same was true of the almanacs. He changed the name of his paper several times for similar reasons. In 1745 he dropped the term "Recorder of Facts" to "Reports," because as he said the items he published did not always turn out to be true, and he did not wish to circulate them as facts when they were only reports or news.

He managed his charges for advertisements in the paper on the same principle. His statement ran like this: "Whoever sends in an advertisement for his own profit or a personal advertisement not too large shall pay five shillings. If the thing for which he advertises is obtained after the first insertion two shillings will be returned. If, after the second insertion, one shilling will be returned."

The conduct of the Sower press when thought of

from the standpoint of service to the public, or of the high business ethics that characterized its management, is an honor to the name of Sower and to the church that he represents. It is a type of business ethics all too rare in our day; but it should be an encouragement to the young people of the Brethren Church today to know that the business of the early church was conducted in accordance with such noble business ideals.

### **The Sower Family**

The splendid business enterprise that he built up at Germantown passed at his death in 1758 into the hands of his only son, Christopher Sower the second. In some respects the son even surpassed the father in greatness. The second Christopher became a bishop in the Church of the Brethren, and probably was the most influential man in the church during the years of his active life.

As a child his father gave him a thorough education. He was associated with his father in the printing business until the latter's death. He enlarged and developed the business far beyond what it had been in the days of his illustrious father.

In addition to being a business man of the first order, he was also a great preacher and a wise counselor, a very pillar of the church. He was for many years pastor and elder of the Germantown congregation, and took an active part in the Annual Conferences of the church of his day.



He was also a writer of commanding ability, both in prose and verse. Some of his poems are still extant, and show literary ability of a high order. Above all he was a man of the noblest personal character, generous, kind, considerate, thoughtful. He was universally loved and esteemed.

He left a family of sons whom he had given good educational opportunities, and had set up in business. His eldest son, Christopher Sower the third, he associated with himself in the printing business just prior to the Revolutionary War. He, like his father and grandfather before him, was a member of the Brethren Church, a man of splendid natural ability, an able writer and editor and of much personal prestige. Also, like his father and grandfather, he named his eldest son after the family name, Christopher, making four generations of Christopher Sowers associated with the great publishing interests at Germantown.

The name of Sower has an enduring place in the history of the Church of the Brethren. For high character, moral courage, shrewd business enterprise, fidelity in every relationship in life, Christopher Sower stands out as one of the shining examples of sturdy, noble manhood of whom the church may well be proud.

### **Topics for Review**

1. Explain the conditions surrounding the early life of Christopher Sower.

2. When did he come to America, and why?
3. What of his education? Speak of his resourcefulness.
4. Explain some of the difficulties in establishing himself as a printer.
5. Relate an interesting encounter with Benjamin Franklin.
6. Tell about his printing the Bible in German.
7. In what sense was his German newspaper the first German newspaper in America?
8. Show the importance attached to his almanacs.
9. Explain the business ethics employed in the management of the Sower printing establishment.
10. What can you say of the Sower family?
11. Comment on Christopher Sower as a Christian business man.



## CHAPTER V

### John Garber and Jacob Miller

#### Heralds of the Cross

##### John Garber

**I**N the little rustic cemetery near the Flat Rock church in Shenandoah County, Virginia, is a very humble flat-topped gravestone bearing the simple inscriptions, "17 J. H. G. 87." It marks the last resting place of John Garber, the pioneer Dunker preacher of the Shenandoah Valley.

By the side of it is another stone, of more modern design, somewhat larger and round-topped, with an inscription showing that Barbara Garber had died in 1808, at the age of seventy-five years and five months. This stone marks the grave of John Garber's wife.

Here on this sun-kissed hilltop have rested for more than a century the mortal remains of the good man and his faithful wife who were instrumental in bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the Southland.

Before the disturbances of the Revolutionary War came on, John Garber made a journey from his Pennsylvania home into the Shenandoah Valley. It seems probable that the purpose of this visit was to "spy out the land," probably with the view of later migration. This preliminary visit was made about 1774.

### **John Garber Moves to Shenandoah County, Virginia**

The impression received from the visit must have been favorable. At any rate, during the next year John Garber with his wife and the younger members of his family moved into the Valley and located on a large farm in the vicinity of where the Flat Rock church now stands.

Here he began work as a pioneer. The country was but sparsely settled, and the Indians were everywhere. Governed by the same peace principles, however, that actuated William Penn in his relation with the Pennsylvania Indians, John Garber never had any trouble with his savage neighbors.

When he came to Virginia John Garber was an elder in the Brethren Church, and he was endued with the missionary spirit. It seems probable that the chief motive of his migration to the South was to spread to new regions the Gospel that he loved. At least he had no more than established himself in his new home when he began to preach the Gospel to those about him.

In a short time other German families followed in his wake and settled themselves in the same vicinity. Reports of fertile land and good climate soon spread northward, and this, together with the disastrous results brought on by the Revolution, started a tide of migration southward from eastern Pennsylvania and Maryland. So, Shenandoah, Rockingham and Augusta

Counties, in Virginia, became in course of time the home of a sturdy German population from the States farther north.

### **The Foundations of Churches Are Laid**

Among the later comers were John Garber's older sons. He had a large family consisting of seven sons and three daughters, all of whom became members of the church and ultimately settled, at least for a time, in the Shenandoah Valley. Two of the older sons, Martin and Samuel, had first located in Frederick County, Maryland, where they married sisters, daughters of Elder Jacob Stoner. In 1783 they moved to Virginia and made their homes in the neighborhood of their father. The deed is on record at Woodstock, granting a tract of four hundred acres to Martin Garber in this year. From this settlement sprang the churches of Shenandoah and those of Lower Rockingham County, notably Flat Rock, Woodstock, Linville Creek, Greenmount, and others that grew up from these.

Daniel, John Garber's fourth son, located farther south, near Harrisonburg, in Rockingham County, where he lived close neighbor to his sister Catherine, who was married to Elder John Flory. These two brothers-in-law were able preachers and very active in the ministry. They laid the foundations for the strong churches at Cooks Creek, Beaver Creek, Mill Creek, and Bridgewater.

Abraham moved still farther south, locating on the Middle River, not far from New Hope, in Augusta County. Here the churches of Middle River, Pleasant Valley, and Barren Ridge grew up as a result of his ministerial labors.

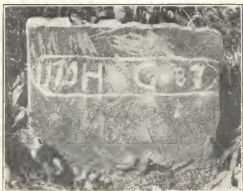
Samuel lived for a time in Shenandoah County, but traveled extensively in evangelistic work. He made three trips on horseback from the Shenandoah Valley into Tennessee, a distance of three hundred miles, preaching as he went and building up centers of religious influence. He organized the first Church of the Brethren in Tennessee, the Knob Creek church, in Washington County, in 1811.

His early journeys into Tennessee seem to have been of a purely missionary character. Later, however, he moved into the State and gave his time and abilities to building up the work of the Lord in that section.

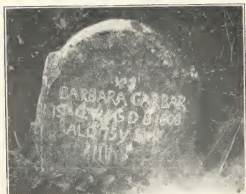
Two of the other brothers, John and Jacob, after living with the family in the Shenandoah Valley for some years, moved, by way of Tennessee and Kentucky, into the Miami Valley of Ohio. Here they became pioneers in helping to build up the Church of the Brethren in that State.

### **The Garber Family**

Of the seven sons of John Garber, six became ministers and the other was a deacon. Of the three daughters, two became wives of leading ministers of



GRAVE OF JOHN GARBER



GRAVE OF BARBARA GARBER





the day. The entire family was closely identified with the work and activities of the church, and they were recognized as leaders wherever they went.

The family of John Garber has made a large and lasting contribution to the Brethren Church. Their descendants are numerous. They have been among the substantial builders of character and civilization wherever they have gone.

The Garber family is typical of the zeal and activity that characterized the Brethren Church in the early days. They were real missionaries. Although they gave religion the first place in their lives, they did not lack in the material things of life. On the contrary, they have been among the very substantial men of affairs as well as leaders of the church.

In less than two decades the Garber family and others who came with them made the Church of the Brethren in the Shenandoah Valley a center of influence and power; so that the general Conference of the church for 1794 was held in Shenandoah County.

The membership alone of the churches of which the family of John Garber laid the foundation in the Shenandoah Valley, and others that have grown up from these, number today at least ten thousand, and this is independent of the work done in other sections and other States.

### **Jacob Miller**

About the same time that John Garber moved from

York County, Pennsylvania, to Shenandoah County, Virginia, Jacob Miller moved from Franklin County, Pennsylvania, to Franklin County, Virginia. It seems probable that the latter preceded the former by several years, thus becoming the first minister of the Brethren Church to preach the Gospel in the Old Dominion.

When Jacob Miller moved to Virginia he was an ordained elder or bishop in the church and had a family of children. He located a hundred and fifty miles south of where Garber, a few years later, settled. Just how he came into the State is not known. It has been thought that he did not migrate up the valley, but probably went through the older English settlements east of the Blue Ridge. This conjecture is natural, as the location that he chose for his home is in the Piedmont section at the foot of the eastern slope of the mountains.

### **Jacob Miller's Work in Southern Virginia**

Here he became very active in preaching the Gospel. He traveled over Franklin County and adjoining sections on horseback, giving much of his time to the free ministry of the Word, and laid the foundation for the strong churches that have since existed in this section—Bethlehem, Antioch, Brick, and others that have grown up from them.

Jacob Miller raised a large family of children, consisting of nine sons and three daughters, most of whom became members of the Brethren Church. Several

of the sons were strong preachers and elders and ably supported their father in his work.

Elder Miller found another efficient helper in a young Englishman named Smith whom he discovered in the vicinity of his home. This man had an interesting history.

He came to America with the British army that George III sent over to subdue the colonies at the beginning of the Revolution. He was not a soldier, and why he came with the army is not known. He was a noncombatant in principle and refused to fight under the British flag.

When the war was over he decided to remain and make his home in America. He secured a farm at the headwaters of Daniel's Run, now in Floyd County, Virginia, and became a peaceable tiller of the soil. This was some forty miles south of where Elder Miller had located in Franklin County.

He heard of Miller's meetings, however, and went to hear him preach. He was greatly impressed by the sermon and later visited Brother Miller in his home. They exchanged their religious views and found a remarkable similarity. As a result Smith demanded baptism and united with the church.

A few years later he was elected to the ministry and became an active worker. He spoke the English language fluently, as Elder Miller did the German. In their evangelistic work they traveled much together, both speaking in the meetings, each in his native

tongue. This served to bring the English and German settlers into close relations with each other.

After serving some years faithfully in the ministry William Smith was ordained to the eldership by Elder Jacob Miller. So, in organization as well as in evangelistic effort, the church was invested with an element of permanency.

Together these brethren laid a strong foundation for the Brethren Church in southern Virginia. In Floyd County, the Pleasant Valley, Topeco, Beaver Creek, and Burk's Fork churches were the old centers. These congregations have since been repeatedly subdivided, but form the original centers from which the congregations of the Southern District of Virginia have grown.

So active were these pioneer preachers in Southern Virginia that as early as 1797 the Annual Meeting was held in Franklin County.

### **A Pioneer of the Miami Valley**

In 1800 Elder Jacob Miller, after preaching in Southern Virginia for more than a quarter of a century, moved with a considerable part of his family by way of Kentucky into Southwestern Ohio. Here he again became a pioneer by being the first minister of the Brethren to preach in the Miami Valley. Just as he had done in Virginia, he was very active in the ministry, traveling extensively and preaching with an earnestness that knows no abatement.

He settled in Miami County, and five years after locating there organized the first congregation in the State. It was known as the Miami congregation, and at that time included practically all of Montgomery County. The church grew and prospered, so that in 1812 the congregation was divided into four parts, known as Miami, Bear Creek, Wolf Creek, and Stillwater. All these have been subdivided since and other strong congregations have grown up within this territory.

Elder Miller preached also in Miami and Darke Counties, and so was instrumental in laying the foundation for those congregations in Ohio where the church has since been strongest.

### **Makes Conquests in the Hoosier State**

But his evangelistic efforts were not restricted to the Miami Valley. After building up several strong churches in Ohio and laying foundations for others, he carried his evangelistic campaigns across the State line into Indiana, and, to repeat two former experiences, he became the first Brethren minister to preach the Gospel in the Hoosier State.

One of the first scenes of his activities here was on the Four Mile Run, near Richmond, in Union County. Here he organized a congregation in 1809. Soon after the organization of this body Daniel Miller and John Moyers were elected to the ministry. They became active in the service of their Master, but Elder Miller

continued as the dominating spirit for some years. He left his indelible impress upon the church in Indiana as he had done in the two States in which he had formerly labored.

When Elder Miller became incapacitated for work because of infirmities and increasing age, two of his sons, David and Aaron, became leaders in building up the Church of the Brethren in Indiana. Both of them were now ordained elders and able speakers, and their hearts, after the manner of their father, were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christian service.

They built up the second Church of the Brethren in Indiana. This was at Nettle Creek, in Wayne County. After preaching at this point for some time they organized the members into a congregation in 1820. Here the second Brethren churchhouse in Indiana was erected in 1845. It may be of interest to some to know that the Nettle Creek congregation was the home of Elder Lewis W. Teeter for many years, and that the Annual Conference of 1864, the last Conference attended by Elder John Kline, and over which he presided as moderator, was held in this congregation and in the house built nineteen years before.

The Four Mile and the Nettle Creek congregations were the mother churches of Middle Indiana. From these have grown by subdivision and extension most of the churches of this strong District.

From Nettle Creek the Miller brothers moved in

1830 to South Bend and began preaching there. A strong church grew up in this city upon the foundation which they laid. From this center, Pymont, Raccoon and Bachelor's Run have grown, with others that have developed from them.

Thus have Elder Jacob Miller and his sons made a large and lasting contribution to the spread of the Gospel in the Middle West. They are an example of what can be done by the dedication of time, talent and labor to the cause of propagating the kingdom of Christ. Men of ability they were, but so far as the evidence seems to indicate, not of extraordinary power. They are an example of what ordinary talent, devoted to God's service and conscientiously applied, can through his grace accomplish for him.

Sterling character, a dedication of our all to the cause of the Master, can sometimes accomplish what much more brilliant powers not so dedicated cannot possibly achieve.

It is impossible to estimate the results in membership, and still more difficult even to approximate an estimate of the good of such lives in the building of character, in the exaltation of high principles and in the inspiration given to noble living by the example of Jacob Miller and his sons.

### Topics for Review

1. When did John Garber move to Virginia, and where did he settle?



2. Speak of the migration that followed him.
3. What were the motives that caused the migration?
4. Name some of the churches built up by John Garber and his sons.
5. Speak of the significance of the Garber family's part in the spread of the church.
6. Tell about Jacob Miller's migration to Southern Virginia.
7. Who was William Smith? Tell of his part in establishing the Brethren Church in Southern Virginia.
8. What are some of the churches they established?
9. Tell about Jacob Miller's work in Ohio.
10. Explain the beginnings of the Brethren Church in Indiana.
11. Which of Jacob Miller's sons carried on the work after him, and what did they do?



GRAVE OF JACOB MILLER



## CHAPTER VI

### George Wolfe

#### A Pioneer of Faith

**T**HE subject of this chapter is another one of those able men who gave a long and useful life to the spread of the Gospel and to building up centers for the Church of the Brethren in new territory.

The George Wolfe of whom we wish especially to speak was a son of George Wolfe, an influential bishop of the Church of the Brethren in Eastern Pennsylvania. The father of our subject lived in Lancaster County until after the Revolutionary War. In 1787 he moved with his family to the western part of the State and settled in Fayette County, where he lived and worked for thirteen years. Here, along with his farming, he was active in the ministry, did a great deal of preaching and built up the Uniontown congregation.

In 1800 the father, with the aid of his two sons, who had now grown to young manhood, built a large flatboat on the Monongahela River, upon which he placed his earthly possessions, including his family, and sailed down the river to Pittsburgh, thence into the Ohio and down this stream to the mouth of the Green River, which flows northward into the Ohio

from Kentucky. Then they made their way up this stream some distance and disembarked in Muhlenberg County. Here they found a colony of Brethren who had probably come from North Carolina.

Here again the father became active in evangelistic work, and was the leader in building up several large congregations. His evangelistic efforts were not restricted to Kentucky, but his preaching tours carried him as far west as Illinois and Missouri.

Kentucky, however, remained Elder Wolfe's home during the rest of his life. He traveled and preached extensively and for some years was largely instrumental in making Kentucky a strong center for the Brethren Church.

### **Young George Wolfe's Marriage and Conversion**

His second son, George, about whom we wish especially to speak in this chapter, was married in 1803 to Anna Hunsicker. She was a worthy companion and lived almost to the end of his long life. They reared a family of six sons and two daughters, some of whom became active workers in the church.

Five years later George and his older brother, Jacob, moved with their families to Southern Illinois into what is now Union County. This was at that time the far west, and well on the frontier of American civilization.

The year following their migration, their father came to visit them and preached at a number of places

in the surrounding country. While engaged in a series of meetings at Kaskaskia, the capital of the territory, some fifty miles north of where the brothers lived, he suddenly took sick and died. He was buried in the town, and his tomb is a silent witness to the early enterprise of the Brethren in this State.

The sudden death of the father impressed the sons very deeply. Shortly after this George attended a revival meeting held by the Methodists and gave his heart to the Lord. He was elected class leader, and soon became active in religious work. In the summer of 1812 Elder John Hendricks, whom the Wolfes had known in Kentucky, came into Southern Illinois on a preaching tour. George and his associates attended the meeting, and he with his entire class was baptized. George was the first of the group to receive baptism, and it is thought was the first person to be received into the Brethren Church by baptism in the State of Illinois.

### **Early Call to the Ministry**

A few months after his entrance into the church he was elected to the ministry. He at once became active, both in personal work and in preaching, and the next year he was advanced to the eldership. He was now just past thirty-one years of age. He accepted his call to the Christian ministry as from God, and gave this the first place in his life. Such a career of zeal and activity and earnestness and unselfish devotion to

the cause of the Christian church has not often been witnessed.

His preaching soon attracted attention. For logical reasoning, clear and profound thinking and convincing eloquence he became famous. He was also absolutely fearless. He believed God's Word as a divine Revelation and urged upon all men to accept it. He understood its teachings and was perfectly frank and outspoken in expressing his convictions. At the same time he was courteous and considerate of others.

### **Life and Work in Southern Illinois**

He was several times challenged to debate some of the cardinal principles of Christian faith. While he never sought encounters of this kind, he did not refrain from using such opportunities when they came.

On one occasion he was challenged for a debate by a scholarly Catholic priest. The debate extended over several days. The interest was so great that the governor of the territory came to hear the discussion. He afterwards declared that Elder Wolfe's presentation of the truth was the profoundest reasoning he had ever heard. So triumphantly was the truth vindicated in this discussion that the governor feared bodily harm might be done to Brother Wolfe, so he sent a detachment of soldiers to escort him from the place.

In the early years of his ministry he held a union meeting with a Baptist minister at Jonesboro, Illinois. They took turns in preaching, and people came long

distances to hear them. They produced a wonderful revival and the effects of the meeting were deep and lasting. At the close of the last service these two men of God stood upon the platform in the presence of the throng of people and clasped hands. The scene was typical of the meeting that had preceded, of love and union.

This meeting took place before Illinois became a State. When the territory was admitted to Statehood, a few years later, a seal was required for the county. An engraver was employed to design a suitable seal. He had been present at the union meeting, and had witnessed its dramatic close. His design was a reproduction of the two ministers standing with clasped hands, a fitting emblem of Union County. So it has come to be that every time the county seal is placed upon a legal document, Elder George Wolfe is shown as he was seen at the close of the union meeting at Jonesboro.

From his home in Union County he made extensive preaching tours into other counties, and also into southwestern Missouri. Here in 1818 he ordained James Hendricks, son of Elder John Hendricks of Kentucky, the first elder of the Brethren Church to be ordained west of the Mississippi River.

In this same year, 1818, Illinois became a State. It is said that a strong effort was made at the time to incorporate into the State constitution a clause endorsing slavery. Elder Wolfe was convinced that



slavery was wrong. By his extensive preaching tours and his able defense of Gospel principles he was widely and favorably known. He raised his voice in opposition to the slavery proposal, and exerted such influence against it that the article was removed from the proposed constitution. A writer in a Quincy newspaper some years later declared, "Elder George Wolfe did more to prevent Illinois from becoming a slave State than any other man in the State."

### **Moves to Adams County**

After nineteen years of active ministerial work in southern Illinois, Elder Wolfe moved nearly two hundred miles farther north and settled in Adams County in 1831. He was now fifty-one years of age. Here he located on a large farm in a beautiful section of the country, about eighteen miles south of Quincy.

His activity in the ministry did not wane with the change. He soon gathered about him a large body of members, and thus established another center from which the church has grown and flourished. From his new home he traveled on horseback and preached in the adjoining counties, and was the first to bring the Gospel message into some of these new sections.

His ministerial labors led him even beyond the confines of his own State. He was among the early Brethren to preach in Iowa. He even traversed the entire State of Illinois on horseback, and preached in the western part of Indiana. He attended the Annual

Conference of the church held at Waddams Grove, in the extreme northern part of the State, in 1856. In 1853 the ferryman at Naples, Illinois, said, "I have ferried Elder Wolfe over the river nearly every year for the last twenty-five years."

### **The Far-Western Brethren**

It is easy to see that in his ministerial labors Elder Wolfe, with those few who were associated with him in the ministry, was largely cut off from the main part of the Brotherhood. It is not to be thought of as strange, therefore, if slight discrepancies in some of the practices of the church should in the course of time creep in, and this actually happened.

Elder Wolfe was the leader of the body of the church sometimes called the Far-Western Brethren. They practiced what is known as the single mode of feet-washing, had no intermission between the supper and the communion, and accorded the sisters the same privileges enjoyed by the brethren of breaking the bread and passing the cup. The practice of the churches in the eastern section of the country was generally the reverse of this.

Elder Wolfe maintained that the western observances were the original practices of the church. He remembered that his father had thus taught in Pennsylvania, later in Kentucky, and that the western Brethren were observing the original practice of the church.

For some years there was much discussion about this matter. Views in regard to it were exchanged in the "Gospel Visitor," and it was considered at several Conferences of the church. Happily it was dealt with discreetly and in a spirit of toleration. Each party came in time to see more clearly the viewpoint of the other. Forbearance was exercised on both sides, and at the Annual Conference of 1859, held in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, the matter was finally adjusted by granting liberty in the form of observing the rite of feet-washing. In this the western churches led the thought of the church, as their usage has since become the general practice of the Brotherhood.

### **Personality**

Elder George Wolfe was not only a great preacher, but he was a great man. What he did to open up the broad west, to plant colonies of sturdy, God-fearing people and to lead them into the best ideals of life—upon such service it is impossible to set an estimate.

He was held in the highest esteem, not only by his brethren and friends, but by the leading people in all the walks of life. He was urged to allow his name to be submitted to the people of Illinois as a candidate for governor; but he declined all political honor, declaring that his mission was to preach the Gospel of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He did not cut himself off, however, from political interests. It was his custom on election day to go to the polls and vote.



GEORGE WOLFE





He believed in good government, and in the election of suitable men to governmental office.

He was a man of unusual natural ability. His early environment did not permit of adequate school opportunities. He used well, however, the privileges for education that were open to him. By his own efforts, very largely, he developed a well-trained mind. He was a logical thinker and a close and cogent reasoner. He was a careful observer of life and quick in the comprehension of truth. Senator Richardson, of Quincy, Illinois, who was well acquainted with him for many years, said that he regarded Elder Wolfe as the profoundest thinker that the State of Illinois ever produced.

He was a large man physically, towering more than six feet and weighing more than two hundred seventy-five pounds. He was strong and enjoyed good health. He was capable of great endurance. He was endowed bodily as well as intellectually and spiritually, for the great work of horseback evangelism which he performed so nobly.

The life of Elder George Wolfe is an inspiration and a blessing. The people among whom he lived looked up to him as a father. He commanded the respect and reverence of all who knew him. His manner of life while simple and dignified was at the same time noble and impressive. The very memory of him is as a sweet-smelling savor, inspiring us to noble endeavor and high living.

Few preachers at any time or among any people have ever impressed themselves upon their hearers more lastingly and more helpfully than did he. There was a singular dignity and nobility in his very presence that almost inspired awe. No one ever used bad language before him. His very look was a rebuke to evil in whatever form.

A minister who knew him and often heard him preach, said, "His manner of speech, like his presence, was commanding, yet as gentle as a child. His language was simple, easily understood by even a child, and yet a philosopher would listen to it spell-bound. I have heard him preach two hours, but never knew any one to leave the congregation because he was not interested. In some respects he is the grandest preacher I ever heard. I never saw a man who sat under his artless eloquence but that arose with a feeling, 'I will be a better man.' He was the most highly revered man I ever saw."

Near the close of his life he spoke in these words of his work: "I have preached the Gospel for over fifty years. I labored much when Illinois was a wilderness. My work is now nearly done. I have, like Paul, finished my course, and if, when eternity shall dawn, and I gaze with a raptured vision on the mighty hosts of the redeemed, there shall be in that mighty throng one soul numbered with the blessed because I worked, prayed and preached, I shall be fully repaid for all of my labors here."

He died November 16, 1865, having attained the good age of fourscore and five years. He was buried near Libertyville, Illinois, where a simple stone marks his last resting place.

### **Topics for Review**

1. Give an account of Elder George Wolfe's family in western Pennsylvania.
2. Describe the removal to Kentucky.
3. When, where, and to whom was George Wolfe married?
4. Tell about the early experiences in southern Illinois.
5. Give an account of George Wolfe's conversion and early ministry.
6. How do you remember him in connection with the Union Country seal?
7. Speak of George Wolfe as a debater.
8. What had he to do with framing the constitution of Illinois?
9. Speak of his work in Adams County, Illinois.
10. What were the characteristics of the Far-Western Brethren? Elder Wolfe's relation to these?
11. Summarize his work as an evangelist.
12. Give an estimate of his personality and ability as a Christian leader.





## CHAPTER VII

### John Kline

#### The Christian Martyr

**T**HE subject of this sketch was born in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. His ancestors were among the emigrants from Germany to the colony of Penn in that numerous migration that took place in the early part of the eighteenth century. He was born June 17, 1797.

When he was fourteen years of age the family moved to the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, and located on a farm a mile south of Broadway on the Linville Creek. Here they acquired a splendid estate of rich, productive land in a community that came to be thickly settled by the Brethren.

#### Early Marriage and Conversion

At the age of twenty-one, March 10, 1818, he was united in marriage with Anna Wampler, daughter of Elder John Wampler who had moved from Maryland to Rockingham County about the same time the Klines came from Pennsylvania. The young couple established themselves on a farm near the Kline homestead, where they lived the rest of their lives.

John Kline joined the church early in life. In 1828

the Linville Creek churchhouse was built upon one end of his farm. Here he worshiped, and over this congregation he presided for many years. In this church he was elected to the ministry in 1830, and after advancement was ordained to the eldership, April 13, 1847.

Here is the outline of a distinguished life lived in noble devotion and heroic self-sacrifice. While exceptional in many of its activities, it is typical of that high courage and loyal devotion to the interests of the church which had so much to do with laying the broad and deep foundation for the older settlements where the Church of the Brethren has taken deep root and flourished.

### **Devotion to the Christian Ministry**

From the beginning of his ministerial career in 1830, the first aim and purpose of his life was to preach the Gospel and minister to the needy souls about him. Few persons at any time have more completely renounced material things and given themselves more whole-heartedly to the Christian ministry than did Elder John Kline.

It should not be inferred, however, that he was careless in his business affairs. On the contrary, he was extremely careful, planning and organizing his affairs in such a way that business should not suffer while he gave his personal efforts to the propagation of Christ's kingdom. He possessed a good estate, had

an excellent home, an abundance of the material things of life, and yet his thought and effort were devoted first of all to the work of spreading the kingdom of truth.

Brother Kline's public ministry covered a period when the church was spreading out into new fields and the Brethren were establishing themselves in new homes under new conditions. His home community was at this time a comparatively sedate settlement as the Brethren had been established here for more than half a century, but in many other sections they were just going into new territory. Usually they went in groups of families and thus laid the foundation for a community of Brethren or a church. Many of these settlements were without ministerial leadership or other means of spiritual consolation. Brother Kline took these outlying communities as his parish and for thirty years he ministered to them in loving and helpful service, both spiritual and physical, with wonderful effect.

### **Popular as a Physician**

Soon after he began his ministerial career he became interested in the Thomsonian theory of medicine, a vegetable or botanic method of treatment. He took up the study with enthusiasm and mastered it. He considered the healing of the body an important adjunct to the Christian ministry. In true missionary

fashion he prepared himself to be a healer of the body as well as of the soul.

He practiced medicine for nearly thirty years, and had an extensive business. He served the poor without pay. He compounded his own medicines from the leaves, roots, stems, blossoms of flowers and shrubs that made him a botanist of rare ability. In quest of these herbs he made extended trips into the mountains and meadows of West Virginia. He was also skilled as a surgeon for his day, and performed many operations which relieved suffering and brought peace and comfort to his patients.

### **A Famous Diarist**

In 1835 he began to keep a diary which preserves a daily record of his doings during the last thirty years of his life. This is a remarkable record. It tells not only what he did during each day and night, but where he was and how he spent his time. It throws such a flood of light upon a great and noble life as many lives would not bear. In these diaries are recorded many of the sermons he preached, the visits he made, and frequently the substance of conversations he held. It is a beautiful record of a beautiful life, and would do honor to the greatest men in any walk.

### **A Typical Preaching Tour**

As an illustration of his work let us look into one

of his preaching tours which he undertook in the autumn of 1835.

Mounted upon a strong, sure-footed horse he left his home at Broadway on Friday, September 11, going up through Brock's Gap, crossing the Shenandoah Mountain, and then descending the Lost River Valley. The next day he reached the Arnold settlement in Hampshire County, West Virginia. The following day being Sunday, he preached for the Brethren in the morning, and in the evening officiated at the love feast.

The next day he proceeded on his journey westward continuing through Maryland and Pennsylvania, preaching almost every night at the home of some friend, until he came to the Ohio River on Friday, where he was ferried across on a flatboat. On Sunday he arrived at Elder George Hoke's, in northern Ohio. Here he rested and refreshed himself, and on Monday evening attended a love feast in the neighborhood. Two days later, September 23, he attended another love feast at Samuel Mishler's.

He then continued his journey westward, passing through Jerome, Petersburg, and Mansfield in northern Ohio, till he reached John Hoover's where a meeting was held. The next Monday he started again and spent the night with Judge Watts. The following day he reached Allen County, Ohio, where he found relatives among whom he visited until Sunday, October 4, when he attended a love feast and spoke very effec-

tively from words found in the fourth chapter of Luke.

The next two days, October 5 and 6, were spent in council meetings. He then continued on his journey to Montgomery County, where he spent the next Sunday. Here he attended a meeting at which four families, who had but recently migrated from the East, were present. The next day, Monday, he attended another meeting in which he preached on the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Two days later he took leave of the Ohio Brethren and traveled southward to Cincinnati, where he crossed the Ohio River in a ferryboat. He traveled eastward through Kentucky, crossed the Cumberland Mountain, forded or swam the Cumberland and Clinch Rivers at the peril of his life, and finally reached eastern Tennessee on Friday, October 23. Here he was again among the Brethren.

During the week following he officiated at several love feasts, held several council meetings and preached each evening in the neighborhood. On Thursday evening, October 29, he preached at Hase's school-house. This was in a settlement of very conservative Calvinists. He used as his text Matthew 7: 13, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." His sermon produced a powerful impression.

On Sunday following, another love feast was held at which he preached a strong examination sermon, after which he administered the ordinances.

After resting a day he started, on Tuesday morn-

ing, November 3, for his home. Traveling up the valley of Virginia he finally reached Staunton November 10, and his home at Broadway the following day, having been gone exactly two months and having traveled on horseback 1,317 miles. On this trip he officiated at at least eight love feasts, held as many council meetings and preached almost daily.

This is an example of the kind of missionary work to which Brother Kline gave his life.

### **Difficulties and Significance of His Travels**

A journey of this kind at the present day would be a small undertaking, but a century ago it was different. At that time great stretches of country were yet in virgin forest. There were no railroads. Houses were few and far between and many of these offered little except shelter, and often not much of that. There were almost no roads in many of the sections, scarcely any bridges, yet broad and treacherous rivers had to be crossed. His life was several times endangered in crossing swollen streams. But his devotion to the cause he served and the Christ he loved permitted of no abeyance in his earnest endeavor to preach the Gospel upon every occasion that opportunity offered.

Preaching tours like this were frequent and generally were made on horseback. Faithful Nell carried him at least thirty thousand miles. In 1854 he traveled 6,463 miles, "mostly on Nell's back." It is estimated



from his diary that his ministerial journeys, nearly always on horseback, totaled more than a hundred thousand miles.

### **Preaching to City Audiences**

While Elder Kline enjoyed above all things the fellowship and association of his brethren in Christ, he was constantly looking out for an opportunity to preach the Gospel to any who might be helped. In this capacity he frequently spoke to audiences in unexpected places and often, no doubt, people heard from his lips a Gospel message different in some respects from any to which they had ever listened.

Here is an instance: Orkney Springs, in the foothills of the Alleghany Mountains, in Shenandoah County, Virginia, had become a famous resort and was thronged during the hot summer months by people from Washington, Baltimore, and other near-by cities. Brother Kline felt the need of spiritual ministration to these people, and on one occasion sought an opportunity to preach to them.

It was on Sunday, August 7, 1857. The manager of the hotel very graciously provided a large hall in the hotel, where almost the entire body of guests at the resort came to hear him. His subject was "Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to come." He preached a powerful sermon, making an eloquent appeal, and was treated with the utmost consideration.

At another time he went to visit in Baltimore a

relative who was a prosperous commission merchant in that city. Although his visit was mainly of a business and social character, he was in the place only a day or two until he felt that he must preach to the people. His cousin very kindly made this possible, and so each night during the rest of his stay he spoke to respectful and growing audiences who showed much interest in his discourses.

One who knew him well wrote this about his preaching: "The personal bearing of Benjamin Franklin before parliament is not more worthy of a place in history than that of Elder John Kline before an audience. The lucid manner in which he unfolded his subject, his calm and collected demeanor, his immense store of scriptural knowledge, and his intimate acquaintance with human nature gave his Gospel ministry an influence that was immediate and lasting."

On leaving Baltimore he went to Washington, where he paid a visit to the White House and had a very pleasant interview with President Fillmore.

### **Civil War Experiences**

During the Civil War he was very active and alert in defending the Brethren in their rights and securing for them exemption from military service. He made repeated visits to the capital at Richmond to confer with government officials, and maintained a vigorous correspondence with those in authority.

When the Exemption Bill was passed, in 1862, he

encouraged the Brethren to take advantage of it and secure their exemption by paying the fines. In his home congregation, Linville Creek, nine thousand dollars was raised by him in a few days to secure the release of the members who had been drafted. It is known that in several instances those released were not able to pay any considerable portion of the exemption fee, and that a large part of what was required to make up the deficiency was supplied from his own private funds.

### **His Interest in Education and Mission Work**

Brother Kline was also interested in education, and was one of the very first of our Brethren to see the importance of training for the work of the ministry.

One of the earliest efforts to establish a school in advance of the common schools of that day among our people was undertaken at Broadway, Virginia. Elder Kline was greatly interested in this enterprise and gave it his support and encouragement.

In 1852 a query from Virginia asked the Annual Conference to consider a plan for foreign mission work. Brother Kline heartily endorsed and urged the matter. While the Conference took no action, a committee was later appointed, of which he was a member, to consider the matter and bring a report to the Conference. He was heartily interested in preaching the Gospel of Christ to the whole world.

### **Prominent in Annual Conference**

In all the later years of Brother Kline's life he was a constant attendant at the Annual Conferences of the church. He served almost yearly for many years on the Standing Committee, and was four times moderator of the meeting. The Annual Conference of 1864 was the last he was permitted to attend. The meeting was held at the Nettle Creek church, near Hagerstown, Indiana. He made the trip mostly on horseback in a little less than three weeks, reaching his home on Wednesday, June 1.

### **His Martyrdom**

But these were dangerous times. The Civil War was on, and suspicions were rife. His actions were closely watched and there were those who were ready to accuse him as disloyal to the Confederacy and of carrying news to the Federal Army.

Soon after his return home he was arrested by Federal officers and closely questioned. He gave such a clear and true account of his actions that he was exonerated and released; but a few days later he was again taken into custody and once more called upon to give an account of his whereabouts and his doings. This he did again to the satisfaction of the officers. On Wednesday morning, June 15, he left his home to go to a blacksmith shop a few miles distant to have Nell shod. On his return he was shot by some one who was concealed in the bushes.

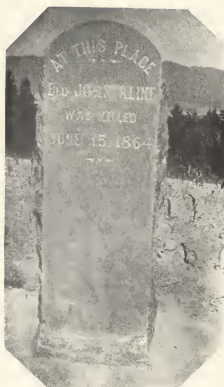
He was buried in the Linville Creek cemetery, where a plain marble slab marks his last resting place. A memorial has also been erected at the place of his martyrdom.

In the war between the States he was ardently devoted to the Union cause. But his honesty and integrity were so perfect that he enjoyed the complete confidence of the officers both of the government and of the army. He was given permission to go and come at pleasure. And it should be added that he never betrayed the confidence reposed in him.

He was aware, however, of the danger he was incurring in passing through the army lines in the time of war. As he was approaching his home from the Indiana Conference he stopped to take dinner at the home of a friend in Pendleton County, West Virginia. At the dinner table they discussed the danger of his position, and he said, " I am threatened. They may take my life, but I do not fear them. They can only kill the body."

This they did. But the thought of death had no terrors for him. He lived each day as though it were the last, and so kept his life constantly in accord with the great plan of the Master.

His was one of those large natures which embrace all mankind in their sympathy. He once said at a love feast at the Linville Creek church: "I have a house that will accommodate fifty, and a heart to accommodate a hundred if they could find room in my





house." This is the spirit in which he lived and worked and died.

### Topics for Review

1. Tell of the early life of John Kline.
2. Speak of his work as a physician.
3. Explain how he contrived to give his time so fully to the ministry.
4. What do we learn from his diary?
5. Explain the significance of his travels among the churches.
6. Tell of some of his Civil War experiences.
7. Explain his attitude toward higher education in the church.
8. How did he show his interest and faith in general missions?
9. Tell about his work in connection with the Annual Conferences.
10. Tell of his martyrdom.
11. Sum up his character.





## CHAPTER VIII

### James Quinter

#### An Apostle of Culture

**F**EW names are more familiar to members of the Brethren Church than that of the subject of this chapter. James Quinter was the son of John Quinter, a day laborer of Philadelphia. The boy's mother was Mary Smith, a native of New Jersey. While the Quinters were poor, they were sturdy, honest and industrious.

James was born in Philadelphia, February 1, 1816. When he was six years old the family moved to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, where the father and son found work in an iron mill. Hard labor, incessant toil, and exposure brought early death to the father, when the boy was only thirteen years of age. The support of a widowed mother and two sisters now made it incumbent upon him to become the chief breadwinner of the family.

This made it difficult for young James Quinter to enjoy even the meager educational opportunities that the public schools of that day afforded. He was eager to learn, however, and his mother sacrificed in every possible way that his educational inclinations might be gratified. What school privileges the conditions of the

family required him to forego he made up by private study.

He was an eager reader and devoured earnestly the standard authors and other helpful literature. He bought such books as he could, borrowed others, and kept his mental life growing. Meanwhile he made his regular contribution to the family support by clerking in a store, working on the farm and doing whatever else his hands found to do.

### **Conversion and Early Religious Experience**

During these early years a powerful influence came into his life by his going into the home of Abel Fitzwater to work. Here he was taken into a good Christian family as a member of the household, and the standard of godly conversation and Christian deportment exercised a profound and lasting influence upon his life. His thirst for education was ministered to by books in the Fitzwater home, and the daily prayers and true Christian piety made an impression that never left him. Meetings at the old Coventry church led his young heart to his Savior, and he was baptized into the Church of the Brethren in his seventeenth year.

Following this revival a prayer meeting was organized in the neighborhood of where the Green Tree church has since grown up. In this prayer meeting he first gave expression to his religious experiences. He took an active part in the meetings, and witnessed

zealously to what God had performed in his life. His talks attracted wide attention and he was invited to preach even before he entered the ministry.

At the age of twenty-two he was called to the Gospel ministry in the Green Tree church. From the very first he manifested much zeal and true piety. He had many calls for preaching, and became a strong revivalist. In 1842 he accepted a call from the George's Creek church in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, on the western slope of the Alleghany Mountains. Here he worked zealously and successfully for some years. During the first six months of his pastorate about sixty persons were added to the church by baptism.

Seeing his ability and consecration, the brethren, in order to make it possible for him to continue his work, purchased a small farm and presented it to him. To this he brought his mother and sisters, and once more reunited the family circle. Further to contribute to their support he also taught school in the neighborhood. He taught the same school for seven successive years. So, with his farming and teaching and preaching he led a busy life. And in his hands the work prospered. The church was built up and he was loved as a teacher. For about eight years he carried this threefold burden and left the George's Creek church one of the strong congregations of western Pennsylvania.

He had many calls for evangelistic meetings and

gave a good deal of time to this work. He was one of the most successful evangelists of the Brethren Church of that time. There was nothing sensational about his preaching. His appeal was to the intelligence of men and women. His preaching was especially effective with people of superior culture.

### **Work at the Annual Conference**

At the Annual Conference of 1855 he was elected assistant clerk of the Conference. For some years previous to this Elder Henry Kurtz had been elected clerk of the Conferences. So well did Brother Quinter adapt himself to this service that he was now chosen to the office of clerk each year for the next thirty years, with the exception of one year. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the Conference for twenty-nine years—a longer term of service than has ever been given to any other member of the church.

The part he took in the deliberations of the Annual Conference was characterized by a singular dignity of thought and breadth of view that marked him as a leader and thinker. His life was wholly devoted to the interests of the church he loved, and his wise counsels were sought on numerous occasions.

He was appointed on many of the important committees of the Conference, and sent on difficult missions requiring tact and skill. For many years he was sought as the best representative of the church to handle matters requiring great wisdom and ability.

### **Editor and Owner of Church Papers**

The selection of Brother Quinter as assistant clerk of the Conference in 1855 led Elder Henry Kurtz, who had begun the publication of the "Gospel Visitor" five years before, to consider him as the one divinely pointed out to become assistant editor of his paper. He had been looking for some one for several years for this position. When approached with reference to the matter, Quinter took it under advisement and later decided that it was his duty to accept the call.

The acceptance of this position required him to move to Poland, Ohio, from which place the "Gospel Visitor" was then issued. The next year the editorial office was moved to Columbiana, on the railroad, where mailing facilities were better. He acquired a half interest in the paper, and in 1866 the editorial office of the "Visitor" was moved to Covington, Ohio. To this place he now brought his family to live. In 1873 he purchased from H. R. Holsinger the "Christian Family Companion," and the same year became sole proprietor of the "Gospel Visitor." He now consolidated the two papers and printed them under their combined names.

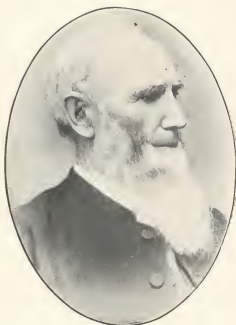
Three years later this consolidated paper was once more merged, this time with the "Pilgrim," a weekly published by Brumbaugh Brothers at Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. This last consolidation appeared under the new title of "Primitive Christian." The partner-

ship thus established continued for seven years. In 1883 the "Primitive Christian," owned by Quinter and the Brumbaugh Brothers, was merged with the "Brethren at Work," owned by D. L. Miller, Joseph Amick and others to form the "Gospel Messenger." The new periodical was issued from Mount Morris, Illinois, although editorial offices were maintained for some years at Huntingdon also.

In this last consolidation Elder Quinter was made editor-in-chief of the paper, and this office he held until his death. Altogether he gave thirty-two years, the maturest of his life, to editorial service of the Brethren publications. Through this long period, and even before he became editor, he was a steady and greatly-appreciated contributor to the various journals of the church.

As one of large vision, who saw clearly the needs and opportunities of the church, he did much to keep before the Brotherhood those ideals in the development of Christian character that have contributed so largely towards attaining higher standards of spirituality and better ways of promoting the activities of the church. His articles were always well written, thoughtfully considered and his position forcefully and clearly presented. He did much to bring the journalism of the Brethren's publications to a worthy literary standard.

In securing a controlling interest in the several papers and, with the help of others, bringing about



JAMES QUINTER





their consolidation, Elder Quinter led in a unique service to the church. The publication of several papers, all occupying the same field and appealing to the same readers for patronage, was not calculated to produce harmony in the Brotherhood. This situation Elder Quinter clearly saw. His leadership in bringing the various organs together and combining them until only one remained was in itself a piece of Christian statesmanship of no mean order.

### **Other Literary Work**

In addition to his many editorials and articles he was the author of several volumes. He was a number of times called upon to defend in debate the doctrines and principles of the church against those who assailed them. Two of these debates were printed in full in book form. Elder Quinter never sought discussions of this kind, but when challenges were received by the church, the church felt that her principles should be defended, and for some years no one in the Brotherhood seemed so capable of defending these principles as did Elder James Quinter.

In 1867 he compiled a hymn book for the Brethren, which was used extensively in the church for a good many years. In 1886, however, he published his most important book, "Trine Immersion," which is an able defense of the doctrine both from the Biblical and the historical point of view. In addition to these works many of his sermons have been preserved.

These show careful preparation. Shortly after his death, his daughter, Mary, wrote a memorial of her father, including in the volume a number of his sermons.

### **Work as an Educator**

We have already referred to Elder Quinter's interest in education and to the fact that in his early life he taught school for some time. His youthful experience in teaching, although with limited training, was highly successful. At one time he taught the same school for seven successive sessions, and for a while he was appointed examiner to pass on the qualifications of teachers.

He was also the promoter of one of the first schools sponsored by the Brethren. In 1861 a school property at New Vienna, Ohio, was offered for sale, and some of the Brethren in the vicinity decided to purchase it, and open a school with special reference to the needs of the young people of the Brethren Church. This was at the very beginning of our educational renaissance.

Elder Quinter was secured as principal, and with some half dozen others constituting the teaching staff, the school was opened in the fall of 1861. It offered a practical curriculum decidedly in advance of the public schools, and sought to prepare young people to teach or to enter college.

The school ran three years and was discontinued.

The Civil War was on. Educational sentiment was as yet but meagerly developed in the church, and the patronage did not seem to justify the continuation of the enterprise.

The project was abandoned, however, with considerable reluctance on the part of the principal. Against many odds and with almost unsurmountable difficulties, James Quinter had pursued his studies, much of the time alone, but always availing himself of such opportunities for help as he could secure, and had persevered until in mature life he came to be one of the best-educated members of the church.

After an absence of twenty years, spent in Ohio in editorial, educational and evangelistic work, he returned to his native State in 1876 and continued his editorial work at Meyersdale. Three years later, when he and the Brumbaugh Brothers united their papers and changed the editorial office to Huntingdon, he moved to the latter place with his family. Here he lived the remainder of his life.

Professor J. M. Zuck, the founder of the Brethren's Normal at Huntingdon, now Juniata College, had but recently died, and Bishop Quinter was selected by the trustees as president of the institution. He served in this important office during the last nine years of his life.

He rendered the cause of education in the church a real service. His editorial duties, along with those of the presidency of the college, made it impossible

for him to give much time to teaching or classroom supervision, but his masterly sermons to the students on Sunday evenings and his occasional chapel addresses were powerful, stimulating and directing agencies in the lives of many young men and women who attended the school during those years.

### **Home Life, Personality, Missions**

Elder Quinter was twice married, first to Mary Ann Moser, who at her early death left him one daughter. His second wife was Fannie Studebaker. To them were born two daughters. The elder of these, Mary N., became a missionary to India, where she did faithful service for a number of years, her work being especially with the orphan children.

Brother Quinter's home life was beautiful. It was pervaded by a fine type of culture. All the family relations were characterized by love and tenderness and affection. Prayer held an important place in the home. Private devotion at the bedside was a daily habit of the head of this family.

Elder James Quinter was largely a self-made man, but he attained to a degree of culture and cultivation that would do credit to the best institutions of learning in the land. He possessed a striking and interesting personality. He was erect, graceful in his movements, alert, dignified, and yet not austere or remote. He was an agreeable conversationalist, well posted on current events and well read in the best

literature. He was thoroughly familiar with the Bible and had the ability for clear and convincing exposition of its teaching. He carried the absolute confidence and highest esteem of all who knew him. He gave prestige and dignity to any occasion in which he participated, and was a distinguished member of any gathering.

Elder Quinter was greatly interested in the mission work of the church. He ably advocated the church's responsibility in this important work, before the church was ready to launch upon a mission program. When the first foreign mission board was appointed by the Conference, in 1884, he was made a member of the Board, and in the organization was elected its treasurer. He served in this capacity four years.

### **He Met His God in Prayer**

Well does the writer remember when, as a young man, he attended the Annual Conference at North Manchester, Indiana, in 1888, one of the chief reasons for his going to the Conference was to hear Elder Quinter preach; and how great was his disappointment on his first extended trip from home, to fail in this cherished object.

Bishop Quinter was to preach in the tabernacle on Sunday morning. He arrived at the meeting on Saturday and listened to a sermon by Elder Daniel Vaniman in the afternoon. After the sermon he arose to close the meeting. He announced a hymn, and called the

audience to prayer. He was thanking God for the rich blessings of the occasion, when his voice trembled and then ceased, because God had taken him. Elder Enoch Eby closed the prayer, and loving hands prepared the body to be sent home for burial.

What more fitting close could have come to such a life? Surrounded by the Brethren whom he loved, upon his knees before the God he adored, and pouring out his heart in adoration and praise, his soul went home to be at peace with God and the holy angels.

### **Topics for Review**

1. Speak of James Quinter's early struggles for an education, and his conversion.
2. Explain his work in the George's Creek congregation.
3. Tell of his prominence in the Annual Conference.
4. Speak of his work as an editor of the church papers.
5. What was his motive in buying up the various papers and consolidating them?
6. Tell about his other literary work.
7. Explain his work as an evangelist.
8. Speak of his contribution to the educational work of the church.
9. Comment on his home life.
10. Speak of his personal Christian character.
11. Relate the unusual manner of his departure.

## CHAPTER IX

### D. L. Miller

#### A Father of the Church

**T**O the generation of the Church of the Brethren that is passing, the name of D. L. Miller is a household word. He was the eldest of the thirteen children of Abram and Catherine Long Miller. He came of sturdy stock, both his father's and mother's people being prosperous and influential members of the Brethren Church for generations before him.

Of their thirteen children only eight grew to maturity—seven sons and one daughter. Of these seven sons, six became active officials of the church, and the sister is the wife of an influential elder and has given two of her daughters to the foreign mission work of the church.

Brother Miller's father was a miller by trade. He owned a large and successful mill and a farm in Washington County, Maryland, a few miles from Hagerstown. In his early life he and his wife made their home in the basement of the mill, and here their first child, Daniel Long Miller, was born, October 5, 1841.

Farm life was not attended at that time with all the conveniences of today. In boyhood and early life, Brother Miller had his share of pleasure and youthful



experiences, but he also had his share of hard work in the mill and on the farm. His school opportunities were meager, although he enjoyed reading books and by this means cultivated his mind outside of the school room.

He was converted in his twenty-second year and joined the church. He was elected to the ministry in 1887, and in 1891 was ordained to the eldership.

At the age of twenty-two he prepared himself to teach school. He taught successfully several sessions, and was on the point of going away to a normal school to prepare himself better to teach, when a business opportunity called him to Philadelphia.

### **His Marriage and Business Career**

The business in which he engaged did not turn out well, but his going to Philadelphia he always regarded as the turning point of his life. While in the city he boarded in the home of a Mrs. Talley, who had a beautiful daughter, Elizabeth, slightly younger than her boarder. Brother Miller was in the city only three months, but this was long enough. He always declared that it was a case of love at first sight.

He gave up further educational work and decided to go into business. So he left the farm and went west. He knew some people who had moved to Illinois a few years before and settled near Polo, eleven miles from Mount Morris. Here he worked on a farm and learned to like the country. He visited back and forth



MILL IN WHICH D. L. MILLER WAS BORN



for several years and after his marriage in 1868 went to Illinois to live.

He now had a new motive for his life's work and decided to enter business for himself. He first engaged in the produce trade, later adding a general line of groceries. In this he succeeded. Several years later he formed another partnership, in which he launched into the handling of grain. This adventure was not successful. In fact, the enterprise failed and he lost more than he put into it. But he thrived in the grocery line and recovered his losses. While engaged in this business for a period of some ten years, he cleared probably fifteen thousand dollars.

It was during these same years at Polo as a business man that he got his first editorial experience. For some four years he was editor of the "Argus," a journal devoted to fancy poultry and pet animals. Some of the issues of the paper attracted attention, and a number of his editorials were extensively quoted. Always fond of pets, he found the purpose of the journal in complete accord with his sympathies and tastes.

During these same years other marks of distinction came to him. He was elected town clerk and was at one time selected as a judge at the State Fair, all of which indicates that he was a young man above the average.

### **Connection with Mount Morris College**

While Brother Miller showed good business ability—and there is every evidence that he could have amassed a fortune if he had devoted his talents to the accumulation of wealth—he had strivings for other and higher things. One of his best friends, M. S. Newcomer, in 1879 bought a school property at Mount Morris, Illinois, the school having failed under its former management. Elder Newcomer laid the matter before Brother Miller and invited him to become a partner in the enterprise. The matter appealed to him. He had always been interested in education, felt the lack of it in his own life, and appreciated the need of better educational facilities in the church for the young people then growing up. He and his wife considered the proposition for some time and at length decided to dispose of their business interests at Polo and to move to Mount Morris. This they did in the fall of 1879.

The next four years were spent in close touch with the college in the earnest effort to establish it for the good of the church and the development of its young people. Brother Miller and his wife lived in the dormitory during these years, made life there homelike for the boys away from their homes, and in a general way very thoroughly ingratiated themselves into the lives of the young men of the college.

The first years of the school adventure were beset with varied difficulties. But they were overcome, and

the kindly optimism of those who were conducting the institution led it gradually into greater favor. After the fourth session, Professor J. G. Royer was secured to take the presidency of the college. This made it possible for Brother Miller to turn his interest to other things, which he was now glad to do.

### **His First Trip Abroad**

In 1883, as we have seen elsewhere, the blending of two of the church papers resulted in a new periodical called the "Gospel Messenger." The paper was in need of influence and prestige, and the men who were interested in it were determined to have it win the favor of its constituency.

So, in the summer of that year Brother Miller and his wife decided to take a trip abroad. They went to Germany, Denmark, and Palestine and spent a considerable portion of the winter at the University of Halle. Here Brother Miller studied church history and economics and gained a ready use of the German language.

In Denmark he visited the Brethren mission and studied the conditions of the people. He was especially interested in the holy city, Jerusalem, and spent much time in harmonizing incidents of the Bible with local conditions as they are there presented. This was a fascinating study and led him into a still deeper appreciation of the wonder and truth of the Bible story.

The trip occupied a year and was full of interest

and inspiration to those who took it. But it was equally appealing to many others, because during the entire time of their absence there was hardly a week in which Brother Miller did not have an article in the "Gospel Messenger" telling about the interesting things he was seeing, the wonderful truth of God's Word as he verified it on the grounds where it was written, and various incidents of travel and experience. These articles proved immensely popular and in a short time doubled the circulation of the "Messenger."

### **His First Book**

The Millers returned to America the following spring, just in time to attend the Annual Conference. Here they were beset on all sides by interested readers who desired that the articles should be printed in book form. Brother Miller had never thought of issuing them in this way, but the demand became urgent and he consented to do so. So the articles were reëdited and in the autumn of the same year appeared in a neat volume under the title of "Europe and Bible Lands."

The book had an enormous sale and ran through eleven editions. There was an originality and freshness in the descriptions and something so unlike anything that had been produced by the Brethren before that gained and held popularity.

### **Other Travels and Other Books**

Some six years after his return from his first trip

abroad, Brother Miller and his wife decided to go abroad again, and this trip was followed by others. Six times they traveled over Europe, into Greece and Palestine, down into Africa, toured among the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, scaled the Alps, studied in Rome and Constantinople, and on one of their trips went around the world.

The last trip abroad was undertaken in 1904. This time they remained abroad for about two years, spending one year among the missionaries in India. They traveled extensively on this journey, covering altogether about 38,000 miles.

Each venture abroad resulted in a book. Because of the popularity of these writings they may be mentioned in the order in which they appeared. "Europe and Bible Lands," 1884, was followed by "Wanderings in Bible Lands," in 1893. "Seven Churches of Asia" appeared in 1894, "Girdling the Globe" in 1898, "Eternal Verities" in 1902, and "The Other Half of the Globe" in 1906. This makes a real library of interesting travels and experiences in foreign lands.

In the role of authorship his good wife also made her contribution. She had been frequently appealed to by many of her friends to put in permanent form some of her observations and experiences abroad. This she finally consented to do, and "Letters to the Young from the Old World" was the result. The volume appeared in 1894 and has had many admiring readers.



### **In the Rôle of Editor**

During most of the time covered by these travels and the books resulting from them, Elder Miller was also an editor. After his return from his first trip abroad he became office editor of the "Gospel Messenger" in 1885. After the death of Elder James Quinter, in 1888, he became editor in chief of the "Gospel Messenger," and this position he held to the end of his life, giving in all thirty-six years of editorial service to the "Gospel Messenger."

He was a leader in transferring the ownership of the "Gospel Messenger" to the church. This was accomplished in 1897. In this transfer the Brethren Publishing Company, a private corporation, turned over its stock, valued at \$50,000, as a gift to the church. Of this sum Brother Miller gave \$30,000, retaining only an annuity interest in it during his own life and that of his good wife.

As a writer of editorials his policy was conservative but always forward looking. He wrote about the things that pertain to building up the church: missions, education, evangelism, the beauties of home life, piety, and those constructive forces that make for high character and true living. There was nothing controversial in his make-up, and the general tone of his writings was always conciliatory and productive of harmony and unity of sentiment.

### **Bible Land Talks**

For a number of years after his first trip abroad he gave many lectures in all parts of the Brotherhood, under the title of "Bible Land Talks." These became extremely popular and were attended by very large audiences. He had an interesting and forceful way of telling what he had seen and learned. His messages were simple, easy to understand, and yet full of convincing statements and were beautifully expressed.

In his later years, however, he discontinued lecturing. And for the last ten years of his life he devoted his time entirely to preaching. He felt that the Bible message, after all, is the thing of greatest importance and of most enduring value.

### **A Promoter of Foreign Missions**

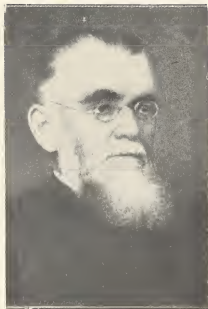
Brother Miller always was greatly interested in the foreign mission work of the church. He was first appointed on the General Mission Board in 1884 and continued to be intimately associated with the work until his death. For twenty-six years, from the beginning to 1910, he was an officer of the board and had a large part in developing sentiment for missions in the church. As editor of the "Gospel Messenger" he wrote frequent editorials on the subject and in other ways kept it before the people as one of the large, outstanding causes for which the church

exists. Elder Daniel Vaniman was his able helper in the mission enterprise.

For some years he was secretary of the board. Later he became treasurer. As endowments for the cause began to accumulate, he had the responsibility of placing the money in secure investments for the church. During the last eleven years of his regular membership on the board he was president of the body and gave a great deal of time and thought and effort to the promotion of this work. After twenty-six years of service on the Board, he, at the age of seventy, tendered his resignation. This was accepted, but he was elected life advisory member, and continued his hearty interest in the work as long as he lived.

We have seen how he and his wife spent a year with the missionaries in India, helping them in their work, trying to understand their problems, and eager to make his fullest contribution to the cause. Several times he visited the churches in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and when in the home country visited in practically every church District from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the lakes to the gulf.

To him the missionary enterprise was one of the very greatest objectives of the church. He felt that according as the church at home gives itself to the development of missions abroad, to that extent will it serve its true mission in the world as a real representative of the Christ it serves.



D. L. MILLER



### **His Part in the Annual Conference**

For many years Elder Miller was a constant attendant at the Annual Conferences of the church. From 1880 to 1920, a period of forty years, he missed only two or three Conferences, and at least on one of these occasions he was not in the United States when the Conference was held.

At the Conferences he was frequently called upon to serve on committees into whose hands important business of the Conference was intrusted.

He took an active part in the deliberations of the Conference, appearing frequently on the programs in the discussions. His judgment always was sought on important matters.

His extensive travels among the churches in all parts of the Brotherhood gave him a very direct and first-hand touch with conditions everywhere, such as few of the brethren possessed. He was everywhere loved and implicit confidence was reposed in him.

### **A Great and Lovable Personality**

Few men have been more universally loved and esteemed than was Brother Miller. His visits to the churches in all parts of the country gave him a personal acquaintance with the membership which very few people ever possessed. His fine social nature and his lovely personality made him a favorite in any home that he entered. He became in his later years

a veritable father of the entire church, and he was generally looked up to and esteemed as such.

For more than forty years his residence was at Mount Morris, Illinois. He had a beautiful home, and none was more homelike. His lawn was dotted with flower beds, well attended and carefully kept. In his yard were numerous bird houses, which furnished protection and nesting places for many of the feathered tribe. And not only was a shelter thus provided for them, but a place where food could be had when the snows of Illinois cut them off for any length of time from Mother Earth.

In his beautiful home he collected through the years an excellent library. He enjoyed reading and had substantial library sets of most of the standard authors. He delighted in the works of Shakespeare, Scott, Milton, Tennyson, Ruskin and many of the others, the greatest and the best. This splendid collection he left to Mount Morris College, where it has been kept intact and serves as an inspiration and blessing to the young men and women as they come and go.

Numerous honors came to Brother Miller in his later life. Because of his many years in the editorial chair, his extensive travels and writings, he was honored with the degree of LL. D. from Mount Morris College, but he declined the honor. For many years he served on the board of trustees of the college and was a long time president of the board. He was

written up in "Who's Who in America," and was recognized as a leading American in many walks of life.

The influence of this good man upon the church and her ideals, the things for which he stood and worked, have been a precious heritage to those who come after.

### Topics for Review

1. Tell about D. L. Miller's early life.
2. What can you say about his business career?
3. Speak of his work in the establishment of Mount Morris College.
4. When did he first go abroad? Give an account of this trip.
5. Tell about his other travels.
6. What kind of books did he write? Have you read any of them?
7. Speak of his editorial work on the "Gospel Messenger."
8. Was he popular as a lecturer? as a preacher? Tell about it.
9. Explain his relation to the foreign mission work of the church.
10. Speak of his interest and influence at the Annual Conference.
11. Give some idea of his home life and the charm of his personality.





## CHAPTER X

### Wilbur Brenner Stover

#### Pioneer Missionary to Non-Christian Lands

**O**N the Poplar Spring Farm, in the beautiful Cumberland Valley, a few miles from Greencastle, Pennsylvania, the subject of this chapter first saw the light of day. He was the eldest of four sons born to Jacob A. and Mary Lesher Stover.

Both parents were of German descent and had been tillers of the soil for generations. Brother Stover was born May 5, 1866. About three months after his birth both parents joined the Church of the Brethren. In less than a year the father was called to the ministry and served faithfully in his high calling during the rest of his life.

But Jacob A. Stover was not given a long life. He died in 1875, leaving the mother with four small boys, the eldest, Wilbur, only nine years of age. While this bereavement weighed heavily upon the mother, she bravely set her face to the task of keeping her little family together. The children must be kept in school, remunerative work must be found for even their tender hands, and food and clothing must be provided.

In the family struggle that ensued Wilbur showed a courageous and manly spirit. He set eagerly about

performing any kind of task that would help to make ends meet and achieve the object of the family plans. As a mere boy he worked on the farm, drove a milk wagon, helped with a neighbor's feeding for his board, clerked in a store, attended night school, and used every available means to turn his abilities into service for the family.

For four years these efforts were kept up. Then the mother remarried, and in 1879 moved with her family to Illinois, where the great west seemed to afford larger opportunities for a growing family of boys; and the judgment of the mother in making this change was well justified. The family maintained themselves comfortably and the boys grew and prospered.

### **His Career at Mount Morris College**

In 1884 Wilbur entered the preparatory department of Mount Morris College, and during the seven years following he was a resident of that institution. Here he took most of his preparatory work, as well as so much of the college course as was available, graduating with the degree of B. Lit. in June, 1891.

His school career was full of interest to Wilbur. He was of a social nature, but earnest and diligent in his school duties. He was generally liked and from the first made substantial progress in his work. In the spring of the first year at Mount Morris, during a series of evangelistic services held in the college chapel, he was converted and joined the church.

He at once became active in Christian work. At the beginning of the next session he was elected primary superintendent of the Sunday-school. He later taught a Sunday-school class, took an active part in prayer meetings, and in the spring of 1891 the Mount Morris congregation called him to the ministry.

### **He Developed an Interest in Missions**

Almost through his entire school career Brother Stover was a leader among the students in religious work. He was early imbued with the spirit of missions. A call to serve the Master meant to him to accept his program of teaching and work. Especially during his last several years at Mount Morris he became noted for the insistence with which he talked missions. It was his hobby. No matter whether the occasion was a prayer meeting, a meeting of the literary society, a conversation among a group of students, a private walk with a fellow-student for exercise—no matter what, Brother Stover talked incessantly about the missionary duty of the church.

The phase of missions that especially impressed him was the duty devolving upon the church to carry the Gospel message to all the world. He did not have a particular plan of work, nor did he urge individuals to offer themselves for the service; he was not a volunteer himself; but he was impressed with the importance of the missionary enterprise as a part of the church's duty to the world.

The writer remembers very distinctly when he first went to Mount Morris College as a student in September of the same year that Wilbur had left it in June, and how the atmosphere of the place was still full of what Wilbur Stover had said, and how he had exalted the cause of missions in the church.

### **Becomes a Pastor**

On his graduation from the college, in 1891, Brother Stover accepted the pastorate of the mother church of the Brotherhood, the old Germantown Congregation, near Philadelphia. While engaged in this work during the year of 1891 and 1892, he supplemented his education by taking certain courses at the Temple University in Philadelphia.

He enjoyed the work of a pastor, but his heart was set on missions. So, after a year of ministering to the mother congregation, he gave up his charge to make a campaign of the Brotherhood for the purpose of developing missionary sentiment, so that the church might establish a mission in India.

### **Preparation for the Mission Field**

He had read many books on the various India missions and had familiarized himself thoroughly with the conditions, the problems, and the needs of that vast, dark field. He signed up as a volunteer himself, he made an enthusiastic campaign and created a great



THE WILBUR B. STOVER FAMILY IN 1921  
Inset—WILBUR B. STOVER IN 1894



deal of sentiment that helped the church get ready to put on a foreign mission program.

In the summer of 1893 he was married to a former schoolmate at Mount Morris, Mary Emmert. She, like himself, was very devotional in spirit, and her heart yearned for the benighted and needy peoples beyond the sea. Together they talked the matter over and felt the Spirit leading their lives in the direction of this great work. They were wholly consecrated to the Lord's will in the matter, and when the Annual Conference of 1894 at Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, decided to open a mission in India and appointed the Stovers to head the enterprise, they found themselves ready and willing to assume the responsible task.

### **Our Pioneer Missionary to Non-Christian Lands**

So, in the fall of the same year, Brother Stover and his wife and Bertha Ryan were sent as the first missionaries of the Church of the Brethren to India. This was a momentous occasion in the life of Brother Stover. It was the beginning of a distinguished career wholly dedicated to the service of the Lord.

Not only did the missionaries feel the importance of the occasion and the responsibilities of the undertaking, but the Mission Board fully shared these with them. To all of them everything was new. Life in a heathen land was a thing with which the church had had no experience. About the difficulties to be encountered there were many conjectures. Three lone young



people, a man and two women, to be set adrift, as it were, in a non-Christian world numbering hundreds of millions: it was a gigantic proposition, and it is not remarkable that in the face of it stout hearts quailed.

But no one was more eager or more enthusiastic about the enterprise than Wilbur Stover. No one felt more certain of the outcome and that the whole enterprise was the work of the Lord.

The little party reached Bombay in the late fall. They did not know where they should begin work or what should be the field of their operations. Brother Stover surveyed the territory carefully. He went slowly and cautiously about the matter of locating the mission. He got in touch with other missionaries; he learned from them and in due time wisely chose Bulsar, with adjacent territory, comprising a population of some two million people, as a basis of his work.

For three years the little party resided at Bulsar, studying the language, mingling with the people, investigating their life, and ministering to them in such ways as they could.

After returning from the first furlough home, and being equally interested in all parts of the mission field, Brother Stover was transferred from Bulsar to Ankleshwer, where he spent twelve years, and where he came into closest contact with the hill tribe known as Bhils. During the war period the British Government gave him two silver medals in recognition of his influential work among them.

He has been in the closest touch with the development of the India work from the beginning. In fact, the history of our India mission is almost the story of Wilbur Stover's life. He has spent three terms on the field, actually giving twenty-five years of service in the India jungles.

### **The First Furlough**

On his first furlough, in 1902, he made an enthusiastic tour of the Brotherhood for the purpose of further stimulating interest in this work. His meetings were attended by large numbers, and his addresses were listened to with the utmost attention. He developed a remarkable enthusiasm for the cause of missions.

Each time he has returned to the homeland he has represented the India church on Standing Committee at Conference. He has several times made the chief address at the missionary convocation, and has never failed to impress his large audience with something of the zeal and consecration of his own life to the cause he serves.

### **His Books**

He has written several books that have made a definite contribution to the one purpose of his life. The first was a little book for children, entitled "Charlie Newcomer." It is a story of a lad giving his life to his Savior. It has touched in a helpful

way many a young heart. The book was first published in 1893 and has run through some nine editions.

On his first furlough, in 1902, he wrote "India, a Problem," which has had much to do with opening up the great field of India to the intelligent understanding of many people. On his second furlough, in 1910, he prepared for the General Sunday School Board a handbook entitled, "Missions and the Church." Since his return to the homeland on his third furlough he has prepared and printed two books, "Missions, the Great First-Work of the Church," and "The Family Worship." One appeared in 1922; the other in 1923.

All of these books have a message and a mission. They seek to develop the devotional life and to cultivate the feeling of responsibility for others. All have had good sales and have no doubt touched many lives helpfully.

### **The Stover Family**

Meanwhile other things have engaged their attention. Brother Stover has availed himself of the opportunity for further study at the university, has traveled extensively among the churches, and has served as pastor temporarily, in addition to giving a good deal of time to writing his books. Besides his college degree he is an M. A. of Northwestern University and a D. D. of Mount Morris College.

The Stovers have an interesting family of five chil-

dren. The eldest son, J. Emmert, recently married, is a graduate of Mount Morris College and has done graduate work at Northwestern University. He is established as pastor of a church, but is at the same time a volunteer for the India field. He was born in India, has lived in India most of his life, except while in this country for his education, knows the vernacular as only a child of the country can, and has dedicated his splendid life and abilities to the service of the India people. He is only waiting the opportunity to go at the call of the General Mission Board.

All the children are members of the church and are thoroughly in harmony with the work and purpose of their parents. One of the trying ordeals which the parents, and especially the mother, were called upon to undergo was when they set sail after their second furlough, going back to their far-away India with their two small children, leaving the other three in this country to be educated. But devotion to the cause they served did not seem to make this separation too great a sacrifice for those who had given their lives to the Master.

### **The India Mission**

In the more than three decades since the India mission was established, the work has grown to splendid proportions. The church has sent to this field nearly a hundred of her choice young men and women. Nine stations have been developed and a large number

of Indians have been trained for the work. Excellent bungalows, hospitals, schools, and churches have been erected, and the work is in every way hopeful. At some of the stations large native churches have been built up, and excellent church properties have been provided. When the first little group of three went to this dark land they could have had but a faint idea that they should live to see the work grown to its present proportions.

### **Our Missions in China and Africa**

What has been done in India has since been largely duplicated in China. The great Bicentennial Conference of the church, celebrated at Des Moines, Iowa, in 1908, first appointed a group of missionaries to China. The work in China has grown even more rapidly than that of India, but this was natural and to be expected. Everything had to be learned by experience in India. The Chinese missionaries gained much knowledge from those who had preceded them in the other land.

Something like fifty young men and women from our colleges have gone to carry the Gospel to the needy in China. The China mission field is located in one of the northern provinces bordering on the Great Wall. The climate is good, not so oppressive as that of India, and the work there has been wonderfully blest. The native church is growing, and good equipment in the way of houses, hospitals, churches and

schools has been provided. Four stations have been developed and the prospect for this field is in every way encouraging.

The church's third mission in the heathen world was started in Africa in 1922. The field is located in the upper Congo region, a severe tropical climate, although promising as a great field of opportunity. Able and consecrated workers have gone to this land and substantial and lasting results are confidently to be expected.

### **How Missions Have Influenced the Church**

The church has responded nobly to its responsibility for the backward peoples of the world. In its foreign mission enterprise in pagan lands it probably has been second to no other denomination, in the zeal and confidence and consecration with which it has gone about developing its work. In a relatively short time it has made an indelible impression, in three quarters of the globe, upon as many pagan races, and has developed its work with a system and order and economy which commend it to good-thinking people everywhere. One must wonder whether the pioneer missionary, with all of his zeal, could have had any real vision of the extent to which he has been permitted to see the mission work of the church grow.

The mission work of the church has been a great stimulant to the youthful life of the church. Especially has this been true in the college centers. In

each of the schools volunteer organizations have been developed among the students where missions have been studied, consecration meetings held, and the devotional life cultivated.

Many of the young people of the church have by these means been impressed with the significance of mission work, and the nobility of serving. Except for these volunteer organizations they might never have been led to this conception of the Master's work.

The cause of missions, as Wilbur Stover has stated in the title of one of his books, has been accepted generally as the great first-work of the church. And the consecration of the young life to this ideal, and the development of these young talents for this type of unselfish service, is one of the distinct achievements that have come about as a result of his plea for missions away back there in his college days.

The fact that he was inspired by an ideal has led others to be inspired by the same ideal. And it must be a great satisfaction to live to see this ideal worked out as one of the great objectives and aims of the church through its general organization.

### **Topics for Review**

1. Describe the early struggles of Wilbur Stover.
2. Tell about his career at college.
3. Explain his conversion to missions.
4. How did he prepare himself for missionary service?

5. Tell about his work in establishing our India mission.
6. What important service did he perform on his first furlough?
7. What books did Brother Stover write? Which have you read?
8. Give an account of the mission in India.
9. Tell about our mission work in China, in Africa.
10. What part have our colleges had in developing our foreign mission work?





BUILDERS OF THE CHURCH - 1905